PAMELA'S SPRING SONG

MRS. YOUNG.

Mrs. Anderson	..	Oct	17th	- Oct	31st.
Mrs. Spalding	..	"	31st	- Nov	14th.
Miss Murdoch	..	Nov	14th	- "	28th.
Mrs. McVane	..	"	28th	- Dec	12th.
Miss Hynd	..	Dec	12th	- "	26th.
Miss Brock	..	"	26th	- Jan	9th.
Mrs. Paton	..	Jan	9th	- "	23rd.
Mrs. Hodge	..	"	23rd	- Feb	6th.
Mrs. Kirk	..	Feb	6th	- "	20th.
Mrs. Panton	..	"	20th	- Mar	6th.
Mrs. Wilson	..	Mar	6th	- "	20th.
Mrs. Brash	..	"	20th	- Apl	3rd.
Mrs. Cumming	..	Apl	3rd	- "	17th.
Mrs. Robinson	..	"	17th	- May	1st.
Miss Hoy	..	May	1st	- "	15th.
Mrs. Mill	..	"	15th	- "	29th.
Mrs. Rule	..	"	29th	- June	12th.
Mrs. Keay	..	June	12th	- "	26th.
Mrs. Young	..	"	26th.		

PAMELA'S SPRING SONG

By the Same Author

NOVELS:

SCISSORS
SAILS OF SUNSET
THE LOVE RACK
LITTLE MRS. MANINGTON
SAGUSTO
DAVID AND DIANA
PURE MISCHIEF

BELLES-LETTRES:

THE DIARY OF RUSSELL BERESFORD

POETRY:

TWENTY-SIX POEMS
CHARING CROSS
A TAIL OF YOUNG LOVERS
(POETIC DRAMA)

PAMELA'S SPRING SONG

BY
CECIL ROBERTS

HODDER AND STOUGHTON LTD.

Made and Printed in Great Britain, 1929.
Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.

TO

SIR PHILIP GIBBS

IN FRIENDSHIP

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I

THERE were days when the devil was in everything. And this was one of them. Exactly at one o'clock, just as Pamela had powdered her nose and searched in her satchel to make sure she had one-and-sixpence for lunch, in came Mr. Jenkinson and gave her two more letters. He had retained five hairs as the legacy of his youth, and Pamela felt tempted to rob him of even this plastered memory. Perhaps he sensed the danger, for he watched her pound the typewriter from under his bushy eyebrows, which tried to compensate him by their strength for the sad failure above.

"I'm sorry to keep you, Miss Kemp, but I want them to go off at once," he said, as he finished dictating his letters.

"Oh, it's all right, Mr. Jenkinson," replied Pamela, in a tone that was a lie.

He left the room and Pamela pounded. Yes, the very devil was in the day. First, the alarm-clock had failed to go off, so that her old grandmother, incapable of rising promptly through seventy-seven years of unpunctuality, had not called her, and was twenty minutes late with breakfast. Next, it rained, rained as only April in England can rain. And, of course, her umbrella leaked, which proved yet again that five-shilling umbrellas bought at sales do not last. But good umbrellas didn't last either—they were lost early or borrowed once. At the bottom of the street her feet were wet and she had that certain-uncertain

feeling that both her toes had come through her stockings. She had no sooner felt quit of this than one side of her leg was drenched. She looked down and almost cried with rage. A passing lorry had bespattered her with mud.

The train to Aldgate from Westbourne Grove was crowded. It was also steamy, and by sheer ill-luck —or the devil again—she had fought her way into a smoking-compartment, where she lurched in an odour of wet macintoshes and cheap tobacco. Young men, these days, thought the war they hadn't fought in excused them from everything. They sat and let her swing from a strap. Perhaps if she had not been twenty-seven, with all her roses lost in London's stale air, and too many wrinkles gathered in nerve-shattering typing, she would have been given a seat by that immaculate young man in the bowler hat, grey spats and gloves, who seemed determined that the new number of *The Screen* should prevent his seeing a necessitous lady.

But he looked like one of those too-refined young men who feel Hollywood has overlooked them. She would have hated to accept a seat from him. She was sure he had weak legs to match his weak manners. Thank God, she had a good pair of legs and the fashion let the world know it. She always had stood on her own feet, she always would—and she only took 2's.

By the time Pamela reached Aldgate she hated men, particularly damp men travelling to dark offices from mean homes, with all the marks of struggle on them. Life was an unromantic business and she was in a mood when she could not be fair. Their struggle was just as heroic as hers. They had been young, they had dreamed dreams, and married dolls, sluts and shrews, or turned them into these, which was the same in the slow ending.

Fancy a decent woman letting a man come out with a celluloid collar! And why ever didn't that woman stitch the tag on her husband's overcoat, so that he could hang up the poor grey-green thing! And why, oh, why didn't some sensible man realise that she was a woman who wouldn't let him wear a washable collar or a coat with a broken tag. But men had no sense. They liked dolls who munched chocolates in dark cinemas and left powder on their shoulders.

What nice hair that young plumber had. And blue overalls. Blue overalls with a belt were always attractive. His hair was lovely, mischievously curly. It would smell like hay.

"Aldgate!"

The doors slid back, the damp flood of humanity flowed out, depositing her on the platform, cheap umbrella in one hand, cheap metal-studded attaché case in the other, and hate, yes, hate in her heart. For some clumsy fool had trodden on her heel, tearing off her shoe.

Pamela stooped to put it on again. As she rose, something bright, sunny, lovely, caught her eye. It was a poster, with high mountains, sun-smitten fields full of flowers, a low gabled wooden chalet with a verandah crowded with plant pots, two peasants in costume—a woman in a long skirt and crimson bodice, the man in buff shorts, with embroidered braces over a white shirt. And soaring above it all, the snowy peaks of mountains.

It was like a ray of warm sunshine in that dark, damp station. Pamela read the legend over it:

WHY NOT SPEND SPRING IN THE TYROL?

All the way down the platform, had anyone overheard the grim young lady, bellicosely swinging a stumpy umbrella and muttering aloud, they would

have concluded she was somewhat unbalanced. And Pamela was. Events were really too much for her these days.

"Why not? Oh, why not, my dear! Why not spend Spring in the Tyrol?" said Pamela vehemently, aloud, to the world she would have liked to belabour.

"Why not spend Spring in the Tyrol?" cried Pamela to a young porter as she passed.

"Eh, miss?" he asked, pausing in his sweeping of the platform.

"Why not spend Spring in the Tyrol?" repeated Pamela, and then, seeing his bewilderment—"Haven't you seen that poster?" she asked, pointing down the platform.

"Oh, that!" he said, recovering from the strange attack of this fierce-eyed young woman. "Well, if you've the Jimmy-o-goblins, miss, I'll take you—though I'd prefer Brighton."

Pamela had to laugh, and hurried on.

Why not? Yes, why not a thousand things? Why not a set of furs, a Rolls-Royce, a decent husband, a healthy baby? Why not dry shoes even, and a decent house? Why not a home, with a father and mother providing things, instead of this fight for two pounds, and a grandmother with a ten-shilling pension and a weakness for whisky. Oh, why not anything else but this deadly level of scraping existence, with no real youth and nothing in the future but tapping a typewriter and saying, "Yes, Mr. Jenkinson," "Sorry, Mr. Jenkinson!" "I thought you said—Mr. Jenkinson."

Outside the station Pamela opened her umbrella. She opened it with such force in defiance of the ugly, wet world that she forced two of the steel spokes through the cover. She marched to the office holding

the umbrella aloft like a banner. She would stick it into the first man who annoyed her.

Her resolution failed at the entrance to Messrs. Truslove and Trimmer's.

"Your umbrella's bursted," said the hall porter.

"I prefer it like that!" retorted Pamela, sparing him the prong if not the tongue. He stared as she marched to the lift.

"I know what side of the bed she got out of," he observed to the charwoman.

"Hoity-toity madam!" cried the charwoman, moving the cat with a brush. "My 'usband allus says he's no use for typists and milliners. They give themselves sech frills, he says."

II

Oblivious of these comments on her conduct, Pamela had ascended to her morning's work. The devil was in the carbon too. She typed a long letter and then found the carbon copy on the back of it. At eleven o'clock the ribbon came to an end and wouldn't reverse. Pamela emerged from an inky battle with purple fingers and almost purple face. She went to wash her hands.

"What a long time you've been," observed the waiting Mr. Jenkinson.

"I always have a bath on Wednesdays!" said Pamela, with a toss of the head as she sat down.

"I hope you haven't caught a cold this morning—girls' shoes are so light," continued Mr. Jenkinson, as though he had not heard her.

Contrition smote Pamela. Mr. Jenkinson's nose was often vermilion with indigestion and his wife was crippled with rheumatism, yet he never lost his temper.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Jenkinson, I'm so rude. I want spanking!" cried Pamela.

"Oh—it's the weather! This rain's depressing."

"Everything's depressing!" said Pamela, running paper under the roller.

"Oh, come now, not everything! Why, you've life in front of you yet, Miss Kemp."

Pamela swung round on her chair and looked at Mr. Jenkinson. He had worn the same tie for a year, and contrived to smile with the cheapest set of false teeth. And she was sure he had never had more than enough to eat for once in his life, or was ever reckless with half a crown.

"Mr. Jenkinson, how long have you been here?" asked Pamela.

"Thirty-four years—since a boy of fourteen."

"Why not spend Spring in the Tyrol?"

"What?" asked Mr. Jenkinson, staring at her.

"Don't you ever feel like exploding—saying to old Trimmer 'Go to blazes!' and catching the night train for Paris?"

"Good heavens, no—how could I?" asked Mr. Jenkinson. "Why ever do you ask such things?"

"I've just seen a poster—one of those railway posters, all lies and sunshine. But this one really caught me, it really was beautiful. 'Why Not Spend Spring In The Tyrol?' it said. And I want to know why not."

"I can soon tell you," said Mr. Jenkinson, with a sad smirk. "Money!"

"Yes—money. I'd murder my grandmother for money!" cried Pamela, and then, catching Mr. Jenkinson's shocked expression, "You know I don't mean it—like that."

"Money isn't everything."

"Rubbish—trite hackneyed rubbish, repeated by

moulting parrots pretending they don't want fine feathers! Go on, tell me money can't buy health! Well, poverty can lose it quick enough!"

"Dear me—you're rebellious this morning. Now—are you ready?" asked Mr. Jenkinson, raising his letters.

"Tell me—have you ever been abroad?" demanded Pamela, ignoring his intention.

"Never."

"And you're nearly fifty, Mr. Jenkinson?"

"Next November—I don't suppose I ever shall."

"You seem reconciled to the fact."

"One gets reconciled to most things after forty. After all, we go to Bournemouth every year. And my boy went to Paris last August. They went from his school. It cost five pounds for a fortnight. You know it's amazing how much that lad picked up. He translated the whole of a French newspaper to his mother, and he writes once a week to a French boy he met over there."

Mr. Jenkinson's dull eyes were shining for once. There were compensations, thought Pamela.

"Now, we really must get on, Miss Kemp. Mr. Trimmer's leaving for Birmingham this afternoon, and he'll want to sign early."

"Tap-tap-tap-tap. Tap-tap," went Miss Kemp.

Thus the morning had begun, with rain, a late call, a hurried breakfast, splashed stockings, broken umbrella, and a monstrously irritating poster advertising sunshine that poor damp creatures like herself would never know. And now, to crown all, at exactly one o'clock, Mr. Jenkinson had come with two more letters. Didn't he know that unless she got into the corner restaurant early, and secured the seat up by the counter, her lunch would be ruined? At a quarter-past one all the City was there, screaming "Minced

and mashed, miss!" And her waitress was the only one who was civil to a customer with eighteenpence to spend, and twopence tip. Women hated waiting on women. They liked the customers with matrimonial chances—thin-lipped young clerks with hanging cigarettes and cocked-up eyes.

Mr. Jenkinson deserved five hairs, a wife with rheumatism, and no possibility of ever going anywhere but Bournemouth.

But really, this morning she was a cat, a nasty mean-spirited minx. Didn't it rain on everybody alike, and was Mr. Jenkinson to blame for the alarm-clock that hadn't gone off?

Pamela tucked the open letters under the flaps of their envelopes, and went along to Mr. Jenkinson's room. He was seated at his desk holding his head in his hands.

"Are you ill?" asked Pamela.

Mr. Jenkinson looked up with bleared eyes.

"No—just biliousness—I'm like this in the Spring," he said, taking the letters. "Thank you, Miss Kemp, I'm sorry I've kept you."

She smiled, went out, and put on her hat. The poor man looked ghastly, but he hadn't whined. He got three pounds ten shillings a week, lived in a third-floor maisonnette at Brixton, kept an invalid wife and sent his boy to the City of London School. She got two pounds a week, kept her grandmother, and waged a ceaseless battle with bills and whisky bottles. Pamela wondered to whom life had been shabbier. Mr. Jenkinson was nearly fifty. But he had loved, and there was the boy, that by the light in his eyes he wouldn't have changed for a dukedom.

As for herself, she was twenty-seven and had never been kissed by a man who wanted to do more than experiment. And at twenty-seven the sign-post no

longer pointed to the Valley of Romance. She sighed. At heart she was incorrigibly romantic. But now even a film-god failed to stir her. She had already lost the pleasures of the imagination.

How horrid her hair was these damp days. When the sun shone it had a golden glint and was wavy with life. She looked thirty this morning. The sunshine always took ten years off her. Spring in the Tyrol would make her look twenty.

"You little fool!" commented Pamela, cramming the straw shape, with its shiny ribbon and faded cherries, down on her head. "You've as much chance of spending Spring in the Tyrol as you have of wearing a coronet!"

She felt like banging the door as she went out, but she didn't because of Mr. Jenkinson's headache.

II WHISKY

Mrs. Elizabeth Janet Dundas Kemp had begun life as a lady, and was ending it as a dipsomaniac. Seventy-seven years past she had entered life at Tonbridge as the beloved first, and destined to be the only child of Mr. Dundas Kemp, a quietly successful solicitor. At twenty-two Janet had married. Her act suggested prescience, for within a week Mr. Dundas was found full of prussic acid in the back garden. In his pocket there was a letter addressed to his only child, his wife having died ten years earlier, which ran: "Darling Janet, Forgive me, Your loving Dad."

That was all, and it created a panic among the Tonbridge clients, but it transpired there was no cause. Mr. Kemp had not embezzled his clients'

funds, despite the fact that he barely made a living. His affairs were all in order. His business was taken over by another solicitor, who paid Janet one thousand pounds. Being a typical Victorian wife, she gave this sum to her husband to invest. On the morning of her twenty-fifth birthday she woke up to find she had lost both her husband and her money. He had sailed for Canada to escape a tight corner whose only exit seemed via the Assizes. To console him in his surrender of wife and home, he had taken with him a woman whose company he had found secretly agreeable for the last two years.

Six months later, Janet gave birth to a son, who became Dundas the Second. He was the light of Janet's life. For him she successively occupied innumerable bad beds in attic and basement rooms as housekeeper, companion, nurse and 'nannie,' while three-quarters of her wages went in boarding out the boy. At twenty-two he had so defied the inauspicious elements that he was able to take unto himself a wife, being then the secretary of a shipping magnate who treated his young secretary generously.

A decent clean lad, he realised all he owed to his heroic mother. His wife was a bright-eyed happy lass who promptly seconded the proposal that Mrs. Kemp should spend her last years in comfort with them. In the second year of unclouded marriage young Mrs. Kemp died in childbirth at five in the morning. There was such a light in her eyes as she looked on her husband, holding her hand through the grey dawn, as he never forgot. He seemed to walk about blinded after that. So Janet Kemp became a 'nannie' at the same time as she became a 'grannie' to this disastrous firstborn, Pamela Dundas Kemp.

On June 28th, 1914, an insignificant fool in the insignificant Bosnian town of Sarajevo shot dead the

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, thereby, in the tortuous chain of events, involving innocent millions in untold miseries. More particularly it resulted in Corporal Dundas Kemp, a gallant figure in the hodden-grey kilt of the London Scottish, falling, with three-quarters of his fellows, in the heroic stand at Beaumont Hamel.

Thus the circle of tragedy surrounding poor Janet Kemp's life, which had begun with her father and prussic acid, had been completed with her son and Prussian lead. From that time on she had no wish to remember clearly, and found much whisky of post-war strength assisted oblivion.

Pamela left the cheap convent school where she was being 'finished,' and became a typist in the office of Messrs. Truslove and Trimmer, leather importers, at a commencing salary of thirty-five shillings a week. On this, and a scanty pension, old Mrs. Kemp and young Miss Kemp continued life. One had spirit and the other drank it. The old lady led a life of hide-and-seek, mixed with tears and kisses. There were scenes, reproaches, promises—but nothing seriously intervened between the devotion of these castaways in the currents of life.

At the moment when we first meet old Mrs. Kemp, being half-past six on the evening of the first Wednesday in May, she sat contemplating the table laid for tea. She was troubled, for it was a scanty table, due to the awful discovery that money destined to last until Friday evening had somehow ended on Wednesday. The worry of it, and the four flights of stairs, had so fluttered her heart that she had to take just another drop to quieten her. In the last four minutes she had eaten four peppermints in the hope that Pamela would not notice anything on kissing her.

But she was sure to notice the table. There had not been enough left for even a 'quarter' of potted

meat. And she knew she was really to blame. The money, properly spent, did last out the week. Yes. It had come to that. She wasn't fit to live. She was ready to starve her grandchild to satisfy her disgusting craving. Seventy-seven, and a useless, degraded old woman.

The sun, emerging in the last half-hour of its life through this rain-clogged day, struck a golden shaft between the lace curtains of the rooms on the fourth floor of 17 Hollyhock Villas. It was a kindly shaft, for there was only a last half-hour when it was possible for the sun to penetrate this north room. Now, in its parting gleam, the sun gilded the ormolu-mounted clock, Mr. Dundas Kemp's wedding gift to his radiant Janet so many years ago, and the pine-wood frame, with the photograph of mutton-chop-sleeved, crinolined ladies and side-whiskered gentlemen, on the croquet lawn of 'Beechwoods,' the Tonbridge home of the Kemps in prosperous years.

The sun also fell upon Mrs. Janet Kemp, fell cruelly, as she blinked at it, her old yellowed eyes red rimmed, her skin shrivelled, her bony hands working restlessly on the arms of the chair. And for some reason her old mouth quivered, opened and closed, so that the abashless sun showed her yellow teeth and glistened mockingly on the dry wisps of hair she kept smoothing back from her puckered brow. And whether it was the strong light, or the weak whisky, or her agitated thoughts, tears oozed out of her old eyes.

These she wiped away quickly, with a grey handkerchief screwed up in one hand. There were footsteps on the stairs. She never failed to meet her granddaughter. So, hurriedly she wiped her face, swallowing her peppermint, and rose from the chair.

Whether it was shame or grief in her heart, there

was such an inner commotion that she had no strength to go forward this evening. She just said "Pamela!" as she heard the door open, and sat down again.

"Hello, Grandma!" called Pamela, slamming the door behind her, and putting the umbrella in the stand. "What a day!"

Pamela wondered a moment why her grandmother had not met her as usual on the landing, but now, as she looked at her, the old lady had turned her face away. The attitude smote Pamela's heart. Angry, yes, but she simply couldn't reproach her.

"Oh, Grandma!" she said, quietly, going up to her.

And suddenly she saw why she hadn't been met on the landing. For a long moment Pamela stood, striving with the tumult within her. Then she turned and half drew down the blind. The sun had no right to stare so cruelly on Death.

III MONEY

I

THE next morning Pamela telephoned to the office to say she would not be coming, owing to Mrs. Kemp's death. Fortunately an inquest was avoided, as the doctor had been constantly attending the old lady and could certify heart failure as the cause. At the end of the day it seemed to Pamela that it was more difficult to get out of the world than to keep in it. The doctor's certificate had to be taken to the registrar, and the registrar's certificate to the

cemetery officials. Then came the lugubrious business of the undertakers.

"We shall do it all nicely for twenty pounds," said a long-nosed gentleman with a bowler hat and a subdued manner. "Of course, it'll be pine. Oak costs more, and you'll only want a plain plate and brass handles, I suppose?"

Pamela said she wanted it as respectable but inexpensive as possible.

"You've come to the right place, miss. I've buried thousands and everybody's been very pleased. Not a complaint in thirty years. Moderate, quiet, quick, that's our motto. And the carriages to follow, miss? I've allowed for three with pairs of horses. I've a motor hearse, but somehow it doesn't seem respectful-like, and we use it mostly for distances. It isn't nice to hurry at the last like that, is it? I know I shouldn't like it."

Pamela checked the garrulous fellow.

"I shall want only one carriage," she interrupted.

"One carriage?" asked the undertaker, smothering surprise. "Well, that'll make it a pound less. Very good, miss. Saturday at two. And now, miss, if yer don't mind, I'll do the necessary."

He drew out a tape measure as Pamela ushered him into the old lady's bedroom.

The next caller was the insurance agent whom Pamela had summoned by a message.

"Eh—it's very sudden, miss. Poor old lady! But ripe fruit must drop, mustn't it?"

He sat down at the table and fingered his way through a wad of papers bound by an elastic band.

"Elizabeth Janet Dundas Kemp. Here we are. Policy for One Hundred Pounds. Now, aren't yer

pleased yer kept up the premiums, miss, and you a-saying you'd drop them every time I called ! "

" Well, I seemed to have paid in hundreds," observed Pamela, who had often contemplated surrendering the policy. Sometimes the premiums had almost taken the clothes off her back.

" That wasn't your fault, miss, and it wasn't ours, was it ? We couldn't tell the Lord would bless the old lady with such a wonderfully long life. Though as for myself, I've no wish to live after I can't work, and feel a burden to my children—though I don't suggest she was ! "

He spread out the policy on the table, which looked important enough for a large estate deed. For a few minutes he figured industriously with a lead pencil while Pamela stood by.

" Well, now, that's very nice, Miss Kemp. I reckon that *with profits* you'll draw one hundred and forty-two pounds. That's something worth saving for, isn't it ? And you'll be wanting it soon, of course. Will it do if I come round in the morning with the money ? "

" Yes, thank you, that will be quite soon enough."

The insurance agent rose, crossed to the door and then halted.

" And what about increasing your own, Miss Kemp —as you won't have these premiums any longer ? " he asked.

Pamela smiled at him.

" No, thanks—as a matter of fact, I think I shall drop my own policy."

" But surely, Miss Kemp——" expostulated the agent.

" Yes—I've no one to worry about now. I'm absolutely alone in the world now, so there's no purpose."

The agent looked at her meditatively, and then ran his fingers around his bowler hat.

"But a nice young lady like you, miss—a nice young lady with a tidy little bit in the bank, won't be alone long," he said, smirking.

Pamela opened the door a little wider.

"You're mistaken," she replied curtly. "I prefer being alone, thank you."

The agent stared, crammed his papers in his pocket and passed through the door.

"Well, good mornin', miss! I'll be along about ten to-morrow."

But when the door had closed, and Pamela stood alone at the close of a day that had passed swiftly in excitement, she suddenly realised that she was going to be very much alone.

The last shaft of sunlight was moving off the top pane of glass. It was about the time when she had been accustomed to arrive home, to find the tea set on the table and her grandmother coming out to meet her on the landing. She would never do that again, never.

For the first time Pamela realised what finality really meant. For the first time she sat down and gave way to tears. The flood of excitement had spent itself and had now left her derelict and despairing.

What next? Remorse smote her for not having recognised how much the old lady had meant to her. With all her faults she meant home at the day's end, someone to fuss over her, to hear her comments on the day's work, to confess her thoughts to.

It was all ended now. The old lady had gone on. It would be years before she too could follow. Terrifying years.

II

The first caller on Friday morning was not the insurance agent. It was Mrs. Busby, her mother's sister, who lived out at Wimbledon. The old lady had so long outlived her relations that Pamela could think of no one to invite to the funeral. Being the third generation of an only child, relations were scarce. Her mother's married sister was the only person Pamela could think of, so she had written to her.

Mrs. Busby had played no part in the life of the Kemps. She was a rotund self-important lady who had married a prosperous goldsmith, and had herself successively launched three daughters in matrimony. They had all married a little higher in the scale—"Professionals" as Mrs. Busby was wont to observe, with emphasis on "my barrister son-in-law."

Mrs. Busby had openly disapproved of Lydia's marriage to young Dundas Kemp. He was burdened with a destitute mother-in-law and entirely lacked those relays of relatives whose deaths, at convenient intervals, provide legacies for the rising generation. After her sister's death she had seen little of the Kemps. Following Mr. Kemp's death, certainly splendid for his country but most inconsiderate for his dependants, she had kept aloof. Mrs. Busby, who now possessed a motor-car and subscribed to the Opera, had a fear that old Mrs. Kemp might look to her for help in supporting Lydia's child. The perversity resident in the human breast—particularly the ample one of Mrs. Busby—had made her more thoroughly annoyed by the fact that in all these years the Kemps had made no claim whatever. In vain Mrs. Busby had struggled with the ever imminent necessity of snubbing the Kemps. They kept aloof

and filled Mrs. Busby with annoyance at their ridiculous independence.

Next to a wedding, Mrs. Busby enjoyed a funeral. She was fond of flowers and human emotions. Pamela's letter filled her with pleasurable anticipation.

" Of course I must go ! " she declared to Mr. Busby, at the breakfast table. " In fact, I must call on the poor child this morning. It is the least we can do ! "

Mrs. Busby gave an order for the car. When she descended to the waiting limousine she was magnificent in the apparel of grief. Deaths in the family enabled her to show a proper spirit of sympathy. And black, happily, suited her.

It was, therefore, a very dark apparition that stood before Pamela's door soon after eleven o'clock on Friday morning, and gushingly embraced the pale young woman who answered the bell.

" My poor darling child ! Your letter was a terrible shock. Mr. Busby could eat no breakfast. ' Poor child,' he kept saying, ' Poor child—go and see her, Amy.' As if that was necessary, my poor darling ! "

Mrs. Busby cast a hasty glance around the flat. It was clean if sparse in the furnishing. She sat down.

" Now tell me, darling. Did she suffer much ? " began Mrs. Busby, frilling out her skirts and feeling rather like Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse.

A ghoul, an inquisitive ghoul, thought Pamela, looking at the big fleshy face and heavily ringed hands.

" Not at all—I found her dead in that chair," she said quietly.

" Darling ! " cried Mrs. Busby, springing up in horror. " In *this* chair ?—but how tragic—how awful —in this chair ? "

" Oh, do sit down—there was nothing awful about it. I'd like to go like that. She must have died just before I came in. She was sitting there quite peace-

fully, with the tea laid. I didn't realise she was dead, for a moment. It was heart failure."

"Poor dear soul!" said Mrs. Busby. She produced a handkerchief with a heavy black edge and wiped her eyes.

"And the funeral?"

"It's to-morrow, at twelve."

"Of course I shall come, darling. And Mr. Busby with me—and Clarice with her husband—my barrister son-in-law, you know, unless he is on Circuit. You've not met Richard?—such a brilliant lad! Everyone says he'll take silk soon. And so devoted to Mr. Busby and myself. But my dear, I've really come to see what I can do. The car's below. I suppose you've already ordered your mourning—if not, we can go at once."

Pamela looked at Mrs. Busby in her dark glory. The woman simply asked to be punctured.

"No, I've not. I'm not wearing mourning. It's a stupid old convention. Why should I mourn? I'm sorry to lose Grandma, of course, but she was seventy-seven and had had more than her span of life. She was quite ready to go, and said so often, knowing she was a burden."

Mrs. Busby looked at her with widening eyes of horror.

"My dear child! How can you say such things! Of course you must wear mourning! Whatever will everybody think? And as for the poor dear being a burden. I hope no child of mine will ever say such a heartless thing, even if I live to be a hundred. But my dear child, grief has deranged you a little, I know. Come now, darling, we'll go to the dressmaker's at once."

Mrs. Busby forced a smile into her face as she looked at this most unnatural—ungodly—young woman.

"We won't!" said Pamela, firmly. The tone of it jarred the elder woman like the slamming of a door. "As for the neighbours, and the relations, they've troubled us so little in life that I'm not going to let them trouble me in death."

Mrs. Busby put the handkerchief back into her chatelaine, which she closed with a snap. This young woman was insufferable, and her monstrous conduct would spoil the funeral. For a moment she feared she would have to stay away. But a sense of duty to the dead made her tenacious.

"Then, Pamela—you must let me lend you some mourning clothes. There is no need for you to go to any expense. You can come back with me now and try them on."

"Thank you, aunt. But I've no intention of wearing black. Grandma never liked the idea. She said she hoped I'd waste no money on either mourning or flowers," answered Pamela, as gently as possible.

"No flowers! Of course there'll be flowers! It's preposterous. Coffins look awful without flowers—and so disrespectful. Really, Pamela!"

Mrs. Busby had to take out her handkerchief again and wipe her face. It was difficult not to lose one's temper with this absurd young woman. And then an idea smote her. For a moment she felt sorry for the girl. So that was it.

"Darling, Pamela—there's no need for you to go to any expense. I can fit you out quite easily—and you must let Mr. Busby and me arrange for the wreaths—we shall feel it a privilege—a sacred privilege, darling."

"Auntie, that is very kind of you," said Pamela, repenting a little. Poor old thing, she lived in a compound of barbed-wire conventions and would never get out. "But it's not a question of money. I have plenty of money."

"Plenty of money?" gasped Mrs. Busby, incredulously. Had grief turned the young woman's head? "I always understood——"

"You see, Grandma was always secretive," continued Pamela, enjoying the sensation she was creating. "I knew I should be left all right—but I had no idea I should be so well provided for."

(Oh Pamela, on what slippery slope have you now embarked? Little do you foresee to what far ends and strange events this desire to astonish will lead you!)

Mrs. Busby half rose, sat down again, smoothed out her dress, adjusted her rings and acquired breath.

"Pamela—I had no idea—it—it surprises me. I always thought you were in—you had to be very careful. How much is it?"

It had to be gone on with now. One couldn't, wouldn't retreat, before Mrs. Busby.

"My solicitors scarcely know yet—but it's enough, if I live quietly," said Pamela.

Solicitors—magic sesame to middle-class respectability. Solicitors! The word rang in the ears of Mrs. Busby. Solicitors—deeds—property—security—unassailable respectability.

"My dear Pamela! You can't know how surprised, *and* pleased I am. I had feared—indeed Mr. Busby and I discussed it as soon as your letter came, that you might—that we might perhaps, darling, have helped somehow. Don't misunderstand us. We didn't wish to seem—charitable—such a hateful word, but you'll understand, dear. And, of course, we knew you had your work. I suppose you won't give that up?"

Was it hundreds or thousands? People couldn't give up work on hundreds.

"I haven't decided yet," answered Pamela. "With

no one to hold me now, it is an opportunity to travel. I might spend Spring in the Tyrol."

The sentence slipped out like a well-remembered quotation—so easily, so naturally. In fact, at that moment, so familiar were the words to Pamela's ears, she was scarcely conscious of any deception. The idea impregnated by that poster had become part of her being.

Then it was thousands, decided Mrs. Busby. How astonished Mr. Busby would be. She would ring him up at the office. Fancy that deceitful old woman keeping up a long pretence of poverty! They were right not to have helped her in any way. But she had always looked a deceitful, cunning old thing. The girl had inherited some of it too.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Busby, rising and rustling. "I am sure you have a lot to do. But I have one suggestion to make. Why not come home with me? It is too lonely for you here. And Mr. Busby would be delighted."

"Thank you, aunt—but I prefer to stay. There are things I must do. It is very kind of you."

"Not at all, darling. We must see more of each other. After all, we are your only relations, I believe. Well, I'll be going. You are sure there is nothing I can do?"

Pamela was sure.

"Then we'll be here at twelve to-morrow," said Mrs. Busby, kissing Pamela twice before descending.

At the bottom of the stairs she realised how astonished she had been. She had quite forgotten to ask to view the corpse. She never failed to view the corpse.

When the door had closed upon the departed Mrs. Busby, Pamela stood in the middle of the room, dazed by her own folly. Whatever had made her tell the

woman such a monstrous lie? It wasn't pride. She was quite indifferent to Mrs. Busby's opinion of her.

Pamela approached the mirror over the mantelpiece and tucked away a wisp of hair over one ear.

"Well, you've done it now, my girl," she said to the rather cheerful image that met her eyes. And she burst into laughter, rather unnatural laughter it might have seemed to acute ears, a little hysterical, ceasing as suddenly as it had begun.

"Here I am laughing, with Grandma there in the other room. I ought to be ashamed of myself," she thought. But Grandma herself would have laughed at Mrs. Busby's amazement. Her sense of humour had always been acute.

The fiction would have to be maintained now. Fortunately she would see no more of Mrs. Busby after the funeral to-morrow. She would say she was going away. That would stop any future visits and difficult deceptions. For she would never admit that her legacy was a fiction, to Mrs. Busby of all persons.

Half an hour later, just as Pamela's conscience was getting unmanageable, the insurance agent arrived. Pamela had never seen so much money before, but she counted it and signed the receipt with a business-like air. The agent was again anxious to insure her life, but he was defeated by her firmness. One hundred and forty-two pounds! It frightened her a little. She would take it to the bank.

IV RUBICON

I

At two o'clock Pamela, having lunched near to the bank where she had deposited her money, suddenly decided to go to the office. There was nothing more

she could do now. All the funeral arrangements were completed. Without something to occupy her mind she would brood on her utter loneliness. It would be far better to go to the office and work. So she took the Inner Circle and arrived at Aldgate Street. Alighting from the train she was comforted again by that attractive poster with its legend "Why Not Spend Spring In The Tyrol?" The events of the last twenty-four hours, particularly the downright lie to Mrs. Busby, made Pamela look at the poster with new eyes.

It was terribly attractive. Even if the real thing were only half true, if the hills were not so green, the snowy peaks so high, the costumes so quaint, it was a new world. It was abroad, and the Spring must be at its very best there.

Suddenly, staring at it, her heart gave a little jump at the audacity of her thought. Why not spend Spring, this one glorious never-to-be-forgotten, if never-to-be-repeated, Spring in the Tyrol? She had one hundred and forty-two pounds. When all the expenses were met, and the rent paid in advance for the next quarter, she would still have one hundred pounds in hand. Never again would she possess one hundred pounds. She was twenty-seven, and every additional year took away the courage to be reckless. And for the first time in her life she was free. There was no one in the whole world she had to think of except herself.

Pamela gave one more glance at the poster, her cheeks flushed, her eyes bright. Then briskly she walked down the platform out to the street. A tremendous resolution bore her on. Never would she forget that moment. The young Napoleon marching on Italy had not risked more, thrilled more with the audacity of the conception.

II

" Why, Miss Kemp, we didn't expect you here until Monday," exclaimed Mr. Jenkinson, as she walked into the office. " I'm sure you've a lot to do. I'm so sorry. It must have been a terrible shock ! "

Pamela thanked him for his sympathy.

" I've really come to see Mr. Trimmer—is he in, Mr. Jenkinson ? "

" Yes, he's just come in from lunch. Shall I tell him ? "

" Please," said Pamela.

She watched Mr. Jenkinson depart for Mr. Trimmer's room, and conscious that she was about to take a tremendous step, she sat down to control her agitation. Was she really going to tell Mr. Trimmer she wanted to leave at once ? It was sheer madness. That poster had turned her brain.

" No ! You've been cautious all your life, my dear," said Pamela, inwardly. " You've never dared to defy Fate. You're freer now than you will ever be again. If you don't do it now, you will never get abroad. And all the rest of your life you'll despise yourself for being so cowardly."

She was still fighting her old timid self when Mr. Jenkinson returned.

" Mr. Trimmer will see you at once, Miss Kemp. He was most distressed at the news. Will you go along ? "

Pamela walked dizzily towards Mr. Trimmer's room. She had been in it twice in her life. Once, when she had been engaged, and again on an occasion demanding similar courage when she had asked for an increase of salary. Mr. Trimmer was the head of the firm and inaccessible save to departmental managers.

He rose as she entered, a little rotund man, with

pince-nez dangling on a black cord, grey hair plastered back from a bland brow, and puffy hands with manicured nails. Pamela suddenly recalled a legend that, as a young man, Mr. Trimmer's ambition had been to sing in grand opera, an ambition nipped by his father who had more faith in leather than larynx as a means of livelihood.

"Good afternoon, Miss Kemp. I am very sorry to learn of your loss. An old lady, I am told."

"She was seventy-seven, Mr. Trimmer," replied Pamela, taking the seat put forward for her.

"Seventy-seven! Dear me! What a wonderful age! More than the span of the Psalmist. Still, it is always a shock, isn't it? You will miss her greatly —greatly."

Mr. Trimmer leaned back in his swing-chair. What really had the young woman come about? An increase of salary? He should have asked Jenkinson, of course. A very determined-looking young woman, too, and apparently in no way distressed.

"I came to make a request, Mr. Trimmer," began Pamela, after a long pause, and with some nervousness now showing in her manner.

"Ah—yes?" said Mr. Trimmer. Then it was an increase of salary. Really, Jenkinson should not have exposed him to this, at such an awkward moment too, when he had to be sympathetic. Perhaps half a crown——

"I wanted to ask you to be good enough to release me at once, if it is at all possible," continued Pamela, with flushed cheeks.

Mr. Trimmer sat up in his chair. He was relieved but, yes—a little shocked.

"Ah—you are marrying at once, Miss Kemp? Naturally—naturally—in the circumstances I——"

"Oh no, not that!" cried the astonished Pamela.

"Pardon me—pardon me, Miss Kemp," said Mr. Trimmer, hurriedly realising he had blundered badly.

"I have come into a little money," explained Pamela, "and I feel I would like to travel a little. I am free now, you see."

Mr. Trimmer took off his pince-nez and smiled affably.

"I am delighted to hear it, Miss Kemp. Of course we will release you, however inconvenient. I wish I had similar good fortune. Travel is a great education. Very well, Miss Kemp, we will arrange that. When would you like to leave here?"

"At once, if it is possible. You see, I feel I must go away immediately," explained Pamela, hardly believing her own voice, and fighting down the panic within her.

"I quite understand. The silent house—the empty—Yes, yes, that will be quite all right. I trust a change will soften your loss. And many thanks for your services, Miss Kemp."

He had risen and was ceremoniously shaking her hand. At that moment a young man entered the room, a little surprised by the cordiality of the scene. Pamela recognised him. He was Mr. Trimmer's son, and a junior partner.

"John," explained the elder man, "this is Miss Kemp, one of our typists. She has just inherited a fortune from her grandmother and is leaving us, to travel."

Pamela was about to expostulate. She had not called it a fortune. She had said 'a little money.' But before she could restrict Mr. Trimmer's imagination the son had spoken.

"Jove! I envy you, Miss Kemp! I'd give anything to travel, except with leather goods!" he laughed. "Where are you making for first?"

He was so friendly and encouraging that she smiled at him.

"I've hardly decided. Perhaps I shall spend Spring in the Tyrol, and then——"

"The Tyrol! Jove—that'll be wonderful!" he cried, his eyes lighting up in eagerness.

"You know it?" asked Pamela. She must go through with it now, and make a good impression. Besides, she *was* going to spend Spring in the Tyrol.

"Know it! I should jolly well think I do! You see, I lived at Innsbruck for six months, learning German. You must go out to Schloss Amras, and out to Igis. And then there's the Dolomites—you——"

"I'm sure Miss Kemp will find the right places!" said Mr. Trimmer, disliking the rôle of spectator and lost time. "Well, *bon voyage*, Miss Kemp—and again, thank you very much!"

They both shook hands with her. Breathless, she found herself standing outside the room. Mr. Jenkinson now. Poor man, he would be surprised.

He was really moved when he said Good-bye to her.

"Just send me a card, if you have time and care to remember us. And it won't make me envious. I've got over all that," he said.

There was such pathetic resignation in his voice that Pamela felt mean and fraudulent.

V COOK'S

I

On Monday Pamela woke up to find she was a lady of independent means. The events of the past few days were like a nightmare. When the soil had rattled on

the coffin, and those last moving words of the Burial Service had been pronounced, Pamela realised that something had gone out of her life for evermore. Poor Grandma! With all her faults, she had been a lovable old creature.

Mrs. Busby had been pleased to notice that Pamela had softened in the end and placed an enormous wreath beside her own, for the girl had seen it would look terribly bare, even though old Mrs. Kemp had requested 'no nonsense of that kind.' But last respects to the dead were surely not nonsense, observed Mrs. Busby, and in her real enjoyment of the occasion she indulged in some genuine tears.

She had been deeply hurt, however, by the girl's obstinate refusal to make her home with them for a few days, and still more by her reticence. How much had the old woman left her? A considerable sum, doubtless, since the girl talked of travelling for a time. Everyone knew what travelling cost.

So Mr. and Mrs. Busby had departed, little wiser. "I can find out at Somerset House, when the Will's proved, my dear," observed Mr. Busby, as they motored home.

"I'm not inquisitive—but I should like to know. The idea of that old woman deceiving us all those years! I shouldn't be surprised if it wasn't a considerable sum. They've lived meanly, as you can see," said his wife.

Mrs. Busby tucked the rug around her legs. Mr Busby must find out.

Pamela, lying in bed, in enjoyment of the luxury of not being compelled to rise with every minute precious in that morning race to Aldgate Street, was engaged in simple arithmetic. The funeral had cost twenty-two pounds, which left her with one hundred

and twenty out of the one hundred and forty-two. It would be necessary to pay two quarters' rent, for she must have somewhere to keep the furniture and to come back to. That meant another forty pounds. Dear me, the money was reduced already to eighty pounds. And she must have things—lots of things—new shoes, at least two frocks and two hats—say, twenty pounds. That wasn't money really wasted. Money spent on clothes, sensible clothes, was not extravagance. They were always useful, especially when she came back, to search for a new situation.

Her alarm returned. How much should she save for that contingency? Supposing she couldn't find a new——

"Now, Pamela, stop it!" she said. "The future's not going to frighten you. One can starve, and we've been so near to it all our lives that it won't be much of a fall."

After clothes there would be sixty pounds left. How much did it take to get to the Tyrol? And back, of course. She would have to come back. Perhaps twenty pounds. That left forty. Expenses at a pound a day would allow for forty days. Forty days and nights in the Tyrol. Five whole weeks in Paradise, a lady of independent means.

Pamela lay back dreaming. She saw cloud-capped castles, snowy ranges, vast forests of pine trees, and, perched on the ledges of precipices, wooden chalets, with carved balconies. And in the fields around the chalets there would be peasants. Smiling, bronzed peasants who offered her cold creamy milk and said "Good Day!"

But how did one say "Good Day" in the Tyrol. And what language did they speak. Was it Tyrolese? She had never heard of it. For a moment a cloud fell on her dreamscape. It would be such a handicap

not to be able to talk with the peasants. Still, there was no need to worry about that. The English went everywhere, and the English always refused to speak anybody else's language.

It was at that moment Pamela recalled something, recalled it with a tremendous thrill. Years ago, so many years ago that she must have been little more than a baby, she had gone with her father to an Exhibition called the White City. She remembered a big court, with white temples—Indian, and a lake, and a water-chute. But most clearly she remembered one thing. What a strange coincidence! She had been taken into a show. It had cost sixpence, and was called "A Day in the Tyrol!"

How funny to remember all that. It was so clear. They looked down the dark theatre on to a stage, lit up, with a wonderful model of a Tyrolean village. There was a church, a bridge, a waterfall and a mill, and, high over all, great mountains with snow on them. First it was quite dark, and then the sun came, marvellously, touching the snow with crimson. Birds began to sing, and the honey-coloured lights in the little chalets went out. It was morning. Over the bridge a man in Tyrolean costume drove some cattle. Then day came, fully, flooding the village with sunshine. The mill worked, the water scintillating as it tumbled over the wheel, the church bells rang in a queer domed belfry tiled with green copper. But now the sky became overcast. Great black clouds obscured the mountains. Then vivid lightning, forked and coloured, flashed in zigzag pattern, and the thunder crashed so terrifyingly that she had hung on to her father's hand in thrilling fear. And the rain! Never had she seen such rain! It fell like silver wires down upon that poor village, which must surely be washed away. But the storm was soon over. The

sun shone again, on green uplands and snowy peaks. Cattle wandered over the bridge, carts rumbled down the village street. And then, on a mountain ledge, a shepherd boy appeared with some goats, and he——

Oh, she could hear him now! He yodelled! Yes, that was what the peasants did—they yodelled. Well, she could enjoy that without understanding a word.

The clock in the sitting-room struck eight. Pamela slipped out of bed. She had always risen at seven, and now she had her own breakfast to get ready. No dear old grandmother to stand fussing around, pouring the hot water into the teapot, warming her shoes before the fire. Tears welled up in Pamela's eyes at the thought. Stemming them back, she made her toilette, having put the kettle on the gas-ring in the bathroom-kitchenette. She really must rise at seven. It was foolish to waste time like this—one's own time.

As she lit the gas-ring her eyes fell on the line of saucepans, turned bottom upwards on the shelf. The old lady had prided herself on her tidy shelves. They were all neatly covered with newspapers scalloped at the edges. And then something made her heart stand still.

Oh, it must be fate! It was more than coincidence. Surely there was purpose in it. First the poster, and now this advertisement.

The edge of the newspaper turned down over the shelf with the saucepans was printed with small advertisements under the heading *Continental*. One of these read—

Tyrol. Count and Countess Edelstein can receive a number of paying guests at their lovely castle in the Tyrol. Inclusive terms, 4 gns. per week. Write—Schloss Edelstein, Kitzburg, Tyrol, Austria.

Pamela read it through twice, until she had almost memorised the advertisement. Then she ran into the sitting-room, found a pair of scissors, and, returning, cut out the piece that so wonderfully solved her problem. A castle in the Tyrol, kept by a count and a countess, all for four guineas a week! That was much less than her estimate of a pound a day. She could have more than five weeks' holiday.

Pamela was not a snob. She was eager to experience anything new. Living with a count and countess was something new. Belonging to a class in which titles had the glamour of the unusual, she was ready to admit that, lovely as was a castle in the Tyrol, it was lovelier having a real count and countess in it. Hitherto her contact with the nobility had been confined to those columns of society movements headed "Court Circular" in the newspapers. She read that Lord and Lady Crowdon had left the Castle, and the Marquis of Breadalone had arrived. Or that Lady Alicia Downing, who had been staying at the Sweitzerhof at Lucerne, had arrived at 909 Eaton Place. And that Mr. and Mrs. Silas J. Hermanheim had taken 54 South Carlton Terrace for the Season. Pamela often wondered how the newspaper managed to learn where all these persons went and came from. But it was extraordinary how newspapers always knew everything. Perhaps there would be a paragraph about her.

"Miss Pamela Kemp has left for a visit to Count and Countess Edelstein at their castle in the Tyrol. No letters will be forwarded as Miss Kemp has been ordered a complete rest."

"You little fool!" said Pamela, suddenly, cracking an egg on the edge of the frying-pan. "Your brain has gone altogether. I always heard that money, sudden money, turned people's heads."

But catching sight of herself in the mirror she was pleased to observe that her head, turned or otherwise, looked quite young this morning. And her hair had more lustre. She would go to the hairdresser's first thing, before calling at Cook's for her ticket.

II

The young man at Cook's, with a background of pigeonholes and a counter loaded with time-tables, didn't seem a bit impressed.

"Kitzburg? Kitzburg," he murmured, when Pamela had said she wanted to go to Kitzburg, in Austria. She had expected him to look at her with surprise and envy, envy of anyone fortunate enough to spend Spring in the Tyrol. But he merely whirred the pages of a fat yellow book and said, without looking up—

"You go to Innsbruck. Change 15.30. Arrive Kitzburg 18.24."

"Eighteen-twenty-four?" echoed Pamela. Whatever did he mean?

"Continental railway time—it goes up to twenty-four, midnight. Eighteen-twenty-four is 6.24 p.m."

He looked at her steadily. She saw it was quite useless pretending she was not a novice.

"Must I change?" asked Pamela. Even in England she had a fear of all changes. You might miss the connections, and always there were platforms to be crossed and extra porters to be tipped.

"There's a through carriage Calais-Innsbruck. Leave Victoria 4 p.m. via Basle-Zurich. When do you wish to leave, madam?"

"Thursday or Friday," said Pamela. A number of customers were waiting around her. She was sure they were impatient with her, and thought her ridiculous.

"Good—we can get your passport through by then," he said, producing a long white form and placing it before her.

How did he know she hadn't a passport? But this young man with the lead pencil, and the carbon duplicate book, and the mass of time-tables, seemed to know everything. While she filled up the form he attended to other customers, and the way he galloped over Europe and North Africa, giving, offhand, boat and train connections, filled Pamela with awe. Having satisfied the impatient customers, he turned to her.

"Getting on all right?" he asked, smiling. "It's an awful lot of nonsense, really."

Her signature had to be witnessed by a Member of Parliament, magistrate or solicitor. She didn't know one of these.

"You've a doctor? He'll do," said the young man. "And your ticket—first or second class?"

"Oh, first," answered Pamela, as though the question were ridiculous.

She had never travelled first in her life, and it would be quite ruinous. But then she had never really lived. No, for five glorious weeks she was going to live, with a count and countess in a castle. Of course she must go first class.

"*Wagon-lit?*"

The young man pronounced it 'vaggon-lee.' Pamela hadn't the faintest idea what he meant, but it sounded expensive, so she said 'No!' quickly. He worked out some figures from his book.

"A return ticket, available sixty days, will be £16 17*s*. You'll want a reserved seat—shall I say Friday?" he asked.

"Yes—and near the window, please," requested Pamela.

He smiled at her again. He was really a very nice

young man and not at all so frightening as he had seemed at first. After all, he must be tired of booking people to places he couldn't go to himself. She'd find it quite unendurable.

"I don't advise it," he said. "You'll get all the grit and smoke from the engine. An inside seat, next to the corridor, is better. You can get air if the window has to be closed, you can get in and out of the compartment, and you can always go into the corridor if you want to see things. The trains are electric after Basle—but they're filthy until then."

"Oh, thank you—I'll have an inside seat. How much will all that be?"

"I'll have the ticket ready on Thursday, and the passport—if you'll post the form on to me to-night. You can pay then. About seventeen pounds altogether. Have you a Baedeker?"

"Baedeker?" repeated Pamela. Oh, perhaps he meant a sleeping-rug for the all-night journey.

"Guide-book," he said, without pausing. "They're really indispensable. You can get one at that counter. And travel cheques on the left, or a Letter of Credit at your bank."

"Oh, thank you so much. I will call on Thursday."

"Thank you, madam. Good-day," he said.

"Good-day!"

Out in Berkeley Street, Pamela took a deep breath. How easy it all was!

VI WARNING!

I

The English leaving for the Continent carry an air of easy indifference. Five hundred years of the tradition of travel have made them nonchalant. There are

boats and railroad lines, motor-cars and aeroplanes, and wherever these end, a first or second class hotel with a concierge who speaks English, and most probably a head waiter who was three years in London at the Savoy or Carlton and says—"Ah—London, sir! I like London verra much. And what will you have, sir? There's a nice *Occhibucci Piedmontese* to-day."

It was a somewhat annoying fact that there were Americans too, who spoke a reputed English, which enabled them to reap all the benefits of those English milords, the pioneers, who had blazed the trail with Hotels *Bristol* and *Chatham*. Knowing they were universally disliked, having too ostentatiously committed the offence of achieving prosperity, at the cost of a Continent determined upon cutting its own throat, they carried themselves with an air of patronising suspicion. They fraternised with the English abroad (except in France which, since Lafayette, was their own special territory), for one couldn't express surprise upon the ways of the foreigners except to someone who understood English. And the English were always very sympathetic about the strange habits of foreigners.

Pamela observing the English leaving for the Continent, was astonished at the ease and lack of commotion. Quietly attired ladies, and gentlemen in not too-festive attire, walked up to their seats and staked out their claims with hat-boxes, bundles of sticks and umbrellas, newspapers and magazines. A few ladies seemed to have truckloads of luggage in the keeping of porters, and yards of veil floating around their heads and necks. And delicately gloved hands that opened and shut chatelaines, manipulating bunches of keys and shillings to the refrain—"Ah, porter, will you please——" "Really, but how tiresome!" "Thank you, so very much!"

Pamela, very conscious that she was sitting in a first class compartment, looked at her fellow passengers as the train ran out through the labyrinth of London. The gentleman in the corner, with the pointed beard, was foreign. Possibly French. He put on a pair of black cotton gloves before opening out a newspaper. Opposite were two ladies, maiden ladies they must be, of not reduced circumstances. They had morocco leather dressing-cases with gilt-fittings, stamped with their initials. Their more personal fittings were gold-brooches, rings, eyeglasses. One of them clung to a little black case in a cloth cover. A jewel-case probably. They sat, stiff and immaculate, neither speaking. After a few minutes a young woman in black entered the carriage and gave them more newspapers and magazines.

"I hope you are comfortable?" asked one of the ladies.

"Yes, thank you, madam."

The young woman departed. A lady's maid. Pamela's first.

Presently a youth went along the corridor tinkling a bell.

"Would you like tea, Jane?" asked one of the ladies.

"Tea—well, my dear, I wonder if——"

"Oh, I don't think the Channel will be rough. And it would be better now while——"

Yes, it would be better now. Afterwards it might be impossible. The thought, new to Pamela, was disturbing. The Channel. She had heard so many jokes and seen so many funny pictures about it. She never thought she would have to cross it one day. It would not be at all funny.

"We shall 'ave a vair crossing, I zink," said the gentleman with the beard.

One of the ladies looked at him a moment, not quite sure whether his observation was really an impertinence.

"Oh, thank you," she said, at last, as if he might have ordered a smooth crossing. He smiled again. The two ladies went out.

"Please, would you mind eef I smoke now?" asked the gentleman. "They 'ave given to me a seat in zis carriage which ees not smoking."

So that was why he was sure the crossing was fair! He wanted the ladies to go to tea. Pamela's heart sank. It would be rough.

"Oh, please smoke, I do not object," she said.

He bowed as he pinched the end of a cigar.

"You go to Paris?" he asked, having lit his cigar.

Pamela remembered the old advice not to talk to strangers on railway journeys.

"No," she said, and looked again at her paper.

The gentleman smoked silently.

"Myself, I am going to Merano—beyond Innsbruck —I travel all night."

"Oh," said Pamela, surprised out of her reserve. "I am going to Innsbruck too. Well, near there—to Kitzburg, in the Tyrol."

"Kitzburg is beautiful—but cold," he said, smiling.

"Cold?" echoed Pamela. "But I thought the Spring——"

"Ah, the Spring. Yes, it ees beautiful. But Kitzburg ees for ze vinter sports—ski-ing."

Pamela hid her dismay.

"I am staying with Count Edelstein, at the castle," she could not help saying.

"The Schloss," corrected the gentleman, between puffs of his cigar.

Pamela coloured. Of course she must speak of the 'schloss' now, not castle.

"You know the Count and Countess?" asked Pamela.

"No. I do not. I haf not 'eard of them. There are so many—*comme-ça, comme-ça!*"

He rocked his hand like an unsteady aeroplane. Pamela looked at him in alarm. Whatever did he mean? So many, and *comme-ça*. What was that? If he knew Kitzburg, he must have heard of Count Edelstein.

Pamela read her paper again. She was thoroughly agitated. It would be awful if she had to spend all night in the compartment with this man. He had spoken first. The two ladies had not liked it. They were experienced travellers.

When he spoke to her again Pamela pretended she had not heard, intent upon her reading. The gentleman smoked hard. He had finished his cigar and lowered the window just as the two ladies returned.

They sniffed a little and each opened a book with a red binding and buff paper wrappers. Pamela, too, took out her Baedeker and read. Dover was reached without a word spoken.

II

The crossing was not terrible, but the landing bewildered Pamela, with a rabble of porters swarming up a gangway, and passengers fighting their way down one, with a filing through large sheds, opening of luggage, questions, and delving of Customs officials, while the English shouted "Rien!" and shook their heads. Then followed a scramble over railway lines in the wake of a blue-bloused porter. It was a breathless, noisy business.

But somehow Pamela arrived in the corner-seat

booked by the young man at Cook's. She paid the porter—not enough it seemed. She gave him another piece of her strange paper and he raised his cap very politely as he went—so two pieces of paper must have been correct. That was ten francs. There were one hundred and twenty-five francs to the pound, so she had given him——

Pamela had no time to make the calculation when a lady with two small bags, and two girls with four small bags, and a boy with a large bag and a portable gramophone banged their way into the compartment. They examined the numbered places, and looked hard at Pamela.

"Say now, isn't that just too bad!" exclaimed the elderly lady. "It's two middles and an inside seat. It's too bad—and he promised us inside corners!"

She bleated the word bad. Yes, it was just too baaad. The two girls laughed and slung their baggage up into the rack.

"I guess we're lucky, Momma, to get any seats at all—that feller didn't promise any."

Americans. Real Americans! The kind that went everywhere. It thrilled Pamela to see them in the flesh. The boy wore baggy knickerbockers, a Norfolk jacket, and shoes whose toe-caps were like pimples. He was as ugly as his clothes, and freckled. He knocked Pamela's shin with his portable gramophone, which he dumped in the corner seat. He carried a portable something else. Surely not another gramophone, thought Pamela. Then she saw the name on it. It was a portable typewriter.

"Well, it is too baaad!" began the mother again, having seated herself opposite.

"Aw, don't make an anthem!" said the boy.

At that moment he turned and smiled at Pamela.

In a second all his freckled ugliness had vanished. His eyes danced with joyous mischief and the face of Puck grinned under the thatch of his untidy hair.

"Our Momma loves a proper grouse," he informed Pamela.

Momma seemed in no way to resent the betrayal.

"It sure is too bad," she said, appealing to Pamela, as she wiped her hot face. "That young feller couldn't get us *wagons-lits* so he promised corner seats. These European railways are sure disgraceful!"

"Why, Momma, you've done nothing but write home how fast they are!" exclaimed one of her daughters.

So that was it, thought Pamela. She had seen it written on one of the carriages as she had walked along the platform. Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits. A *wagon-lit* was a sleeping compartment. She was glad she had said "No," at Cook's. They must be very expensive. And she wouldn't sleep for excitement in any case.

Within ten minutes the Wheeler family, for that was their name, had adopted her. Momma, Sheila, Julie and Bill, from Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Pa made furniture in the largest one-floor-area factory in the world. Now they were going to Lucerne. Yes, they adored Paris, but why couldn't one get grapefruit for breakfast in a civilised capital? And London—those policemen were lovely! It would be nice to die in Stratford. Shakespeare knew what he was doing.

"Aw, gimme corn on the cob, and waffles," commented Bill.

"Don't be vulgar!" said Julie.

"Parley-vous français? Nein! Nicht! Aren't we full of culture!" retorted Bill. "Say, miss, could you stand a little jazz?"

" Oh, darling, not now—not before dinner ! " cried Momma.

The debate was checked by the late entrance of two young people.

" That must be our seat ! " said the slim young lady.

" Yes, darling. There's our luggage. Hurrah ! " replied the slim young man.

" And window seats, dear ! "

" Yes, darling. I insisted on window seats."

They sat down and looked at each other in utter satisfaction.

" Why, that's just too bad," said the Puck-faced boy.

Mrs. Wheeler cast a threatening look at her son. The two girls were absorbed in studying the slim young woman in the grey costume. When she drew off her gloves they were satisfied and exchanged significant looks. One of them nudged their mother. Mrs. Wheeler looked. Then Bill looked.

A man went along the corridor tinkling a bell.

" That's the first service of dinner—would you like it now, dear ? " asked the young man.

" Would you, dear ? "

" I don't mind, darling, would you ? "

They looked at each other, smiled. She rose, he rose. They left the compartment.

" Now, ain't that just lovely ! " exclaimed Mrs. Wheeler.

" I knew as soon as she took her glove off," said Sheila.

" I knew before," said Bill.

" How ? " asked Julie.

" He's confetti in the turn-ups of his pants."

" The poor dears—they'll be covered in grit in those seats," said Mrs. Wheeler. " And her costume's so delicate."

"They won't mind if they're snowed in," said Julie.

"Say, should we eat?" asked Bill. "The restaurant car's half a mile ahead. I'll be hungry by the time I get there."

"Perhaps we'd better, dear," answered Mrs. Wheeler, and, turning to Pamela, "Won't you join us?"

"Oh, thank you!" said Pamela.

She followed them out. It was her first meal in a continental dining-car. She could watch them and save herself silly mistakes.

The dinner was excellent. They talked and ate as they swayed. The train ran through a large station.

"Where was that?" asked Pamela, drinking wine.

"Amiens," replied Mrs. Wheeler.

The name recalled a flood of war memories, darkened London, air-raids, those thick black lines that curled like caterpillars in the diagrams of the morning newspapers, in which military critics proved that that salient was almost taken, or the Germans had reached the end of their man-power, or that Joffre was preparing to strike finally. And the war went on and on, and the black lines bent and curled, but never really moved much, despite the prophets of collapse. And one name above all others was in her mind. Were they near Beaumont Hamel? It would be terrible to sit comfortably here in a warm, well-lit restaurant car, laughing and eating, while the train went over the place where her father died.

No, they didn't touch Beaumont Hamel, said Sheila who had toured the battlefields.

At that moment Pamela had a slight shock. The swaying moved the diners, and through a momentary gap she suddenly saw the face of the bearded man

whom she had snubbed. He saw her, also, and faintly smiled. Pamela hardly knew what to do, so she blushed slightly. Could he be a nice man, who wanted to be friendly or—— In any case, he was old enough to be her father. She had forgotten him in the rush at Calais, but of course he was on the train, for he was going to Innsbruck. There was something about him that attracted her. Perhaps it was his foreignness.

Another interest now absorbed Pamela. The head-waiter was making out bills. It was quite impossible to read hers, the figures were extraordinary, and as the amount seemed to be in francs she had no idea what the dinner had cost. But it must be an awful lot, with wine too. Well, when she arrived at Kitzburg she would spend very little.

The waiter did amazing things with money. He carried a cash-box with all kinds of coins and pieces of paper. He changed them, and threw out silver and yellow and white coins like a man playing chips. And as fast as he counted and took money out of his divided box, he talked in an extraordinary mixture of languages with Yes, Oui, Ja, Si, Thank you, Merci, Grazie, Danke. Obviously all this meant Yes and Thank you. It thrilled Pamela to think she was learning a little. It would be wonderful to talk in foreign languages. She would have German lessons at Kitzburg if it did not cost too much.

Back in the compartment, her shyness departing in the genial warmth of the Wheelers, she began to ask things. Ja did mean Yes, and Danke, thank you. And those extraordinary words on the brass plate under the window. What did they mean ?

Ne pas se pencher au dehors.
Nicht hinauslehnen.
E pericoloso sporgersi.

"That's French, German, and Italian for 'Don't lean out or you'll get your head knocked off,'" explained Julie.

"But why don't they put it in English also?"

"Folks who speak English aren't so darned silly, I guess," said the boy.

The bridal pair had returned. Bill opened the gramophone, and put on a record. Mrs. Wheeler threw him a disapproving look. But Bill sat with a smile spreading from ear to ear as the gramophone wailed out "The Honeymoon Blues."

III

At 5 a.m. Pamela gave up the pretence of sleeping. She was prickly-eyed and cramped. The carriage was really cold. Through the window a grey sky, silhouetted with stumpy trees, was slightly tinged in the flush of dawn. The yellow-faced houses had green shutters and red-tiled roofs. The sun, penetrating folds of white mist in the valley, was beginning to warm them into reality. It was a kind of doll's landscape. They ran through an empty station, with barrows without porters, and the lights still burning sickly along the platform. Sheila was awake too.

"That's Mulhouse—we're in Alsace. The war came as far as here," she said.

Pamela looked around the compartment. Singular changes had somehow happened in the night. The young man was no longer in the seat opposite his bride. They were together in one corner. She had nestled there, her head on his shoulder. His face was almost buried in her hair. They were fast asleep, the fingers of his left hand entwined in hers. Happy creatures. She was a dainty little thing, and he was strong. Pamela noticed the tightness of the sleeve

near the shoulders, and the firm white neck with its dark hair v-ing in the nape. His power haloed her frailty.

Mrs. Wheeler had appropriated the corner vacated by the young man and had put up her feet. Her head rested on an air pillow, her mouth was open. In a locket on her bosom, Mr. Wheeler, owner of the largest factory-floor-area, rose and fell. Bill, having wedged his buttocks with the gramophone, lay with his head on the typewriter. From head to feet he was a complete figure of interrogation. Being very young he would straighten without aching. Julie was obviously a born traveller. She slept upright as she sat.

Three hours yet to breakfast. On her way back from the dining-car, Pamela had seen the *wagons-lits*. She had passed along a corridor so springily carpeted that no sound was made. One of the compartment doors was open. She saw a couple of long green upholstered berths, with portable wash-basin and table. The occupants went to bed properly, stretched out, with sheets and pillows. At that moment she would have given a lot to be able to stretch, and to lie down easily again. But *wagons-lits* were only for rich people. No wonder they travelled. They could lie down all the way from Paris to Constantinople if they wished.

The man with the beard had a *wagon-lit*. He had walked out of the dining-car just in front of her. Had she been rude to snub him like that? But did really nice men talk to strange ladies? She had always been told not. And the two maiden ladies had not encouraged him.

At that moment Pamela suddenly remembered a novel she had read by one of those rather daring French writers. It was about a woman—a loose

woman, who had adventures in sleeping-cars. There were single *wagons-lits* and double *wagons-lits*, most of them double. Perhaps the man with a beard had a double one. Perhaps——

No, she had no right to think that. But it was as well she had not allowed him to become familiar.

The train stopped in a small station. Sheila stepped cautiously over unconscious legs, and peered out of the window.

"Say there's coffee and rolls on the platform. C'mon!"

Pamela followed her out, aching, and descended to the platform. The air was sharp and fresh. The coffee was delicious. Oh, it was wonderful to travel!

IV

It was still early morning when they arrived at Basle, the frontier station.

"We're now in Switzerland," said Mrs. Wheeler. "I just love the railroad guards. Aren't they clean in their spick-and-span uniform. And so polite!"

A Customs official entered the carriage and gave their luggage a cursory glance.

"Ain't it a farce!" observed Bill. "But this typewriter makes 'em curious. They think it's a bomb for one of their gilt-edged royalties."

"Switzerland's a Republic, like America," said Julie.

"'Tisn't," corrected Sheila. "It's a Confederation."

"Nothing's like America," said Bill. "Congress slaps the Senate, and the Senate slaps the President, an' the poor man ain't a single uniform."

"Presidents don't wear uniforms, you boob!" cried Julie.

The debate was checked by a uniform that brought consternation. It was the ticket inspector. Yes, they would have to change for Lucerne. This carriage went through to Zurich and the Brennero.

"Why, that's just too bad!" cried Mrs. Wheeler, amid a scramble to get down the luggage. "That young man said——"

"Pardon, madame. *Qu'est-ce*——"

"*Je dis que le jeune homme—qui dit que*——" began Mrs. Wheeler, laboriously.

"Aw, Momma, I guess we've gotta move slick, and there's no time for you to give French lessons!" cried Bill, loaded up.

"Say, miss, we're right glad to have met you," he said, turning to Pamela, equally dismayed.

"If ever you come to Grand Rapids we'll be real glad to see you, Miss Kemp. Mrs. John P. Wheeler, 146 Syracuse Avenue. There's my card. It's just too bad, isn't it? I hope you've a nice journey. If you're in Paris in July I'll be there, c/o the American Express always finds me. Good-bye."

"Good-bye!" said Sheila.

"Good-bye!" cried Julie, struggling with bags.

"S'long, Miss Kemp! C'mon, girls!" commanded Bill, portable typewriter in one hand, portable gramophone in the other.

Pamela saw them go with something like dismay. They were so friendly. They knew their way about the world so well. They were Americans. Well, she liked them. She wouldn't ever again listen to nasty things about Americans. They were dears.

The carriage was emptier now. The bridal pair remained. The young man looked at Pamela and smiled.

"A lively lot. Momma's a sport!" he laughed.

"Wasn't that younger girl pretty?" asked the bride.

Pamela agreed. Were they going far?

"To Bolzano," said the young man. "We're—we're——"

He hesitated and looked at his wife.

"I see you are. I hope you'll be very happy," said Pamela.

"Oh, thanks—I suppose it's no use trying to disguise the fact," laughed the young husband. "Is it, Di?"

The wife smiled. Words didn't say enough. She glanced out of the window.

"Oh, look—there he is!" she cried.

Pamela looked also. Her bearded man, without a hat, was walking down the platform.

"Do you know who that is?" she asked.

"Oh yes," replied the young man. "That's Prince Leopold of Zagreb, the King of Dalmatia's brother. He was seen off at Victoria by my brother, who's in the Foreign Office. He's been on a mission to England. Nice fellow, so they say."

"Oh!" said Pamela, sitting back. So she had snubbed the brother of a King! How it would astonish Mr. Jenkinson and Mrs. Busby if they knew. It astonished her, of course. And yet it didn't. Somehow she felt that anything might happen now. She was living at last.

V

Pamela had to change at Innsbruck. She was surprised and delighted to find on the same platform the two Englishwomen, with their maid, who were in her compartment from London to Dover. They smiled at her, and Pamela felt very grateful for recognition. She was so far from home, and feeling really lonely in a station whose signs she could not read. By inces-

santly repeating "Kitzburg—Kitzburg!" she had made the porter understand at last. The stupid fellow kept saying "Bitter! Bitter!" Why didn't he say "Ja!" if he understood, and Bitter couldn't mean he was bitter, for he was all smiles.

It was half-past three in the afternoon, and Pamela hadn't had any sleep all night. Obviously the two ladies had had a *wagon-lit*. They looked wonderfully fresh.

"I hope you had a comfortable journey," said the elder to Pamela.

"Oh, most! Thank you," she replied.

"We are going to Salzburg—are you going there?"

"No—I'm going to Kitzburg," said Pamela.

The train came in. The two ladies spoke fluent German. Pamela followed them into the carriage.

"We have taken a small chalet at Salzburg for the summer. We like Mozart so much, and shall stay for the festival," said the elder lady, who did all the talking. The maid had disappeared after superintending the luggage. "Are you fond of Mozart?"

That was a composer, thought Pamela. It would never do to confess she had never heard his music. They were very cultured ladies obviously.

"Oh, I adore him!" exclaimed Pamela, with enthusiasm that surprised herself.

"The festival is enchanting!" murmured the quiet sister. "It will be our fourth."

"Fifth, Jane," corrected the elder lady.

"Oh, yes, the fifth, dear."

"You speak German?" asked Pamela. "I wish I could."

The two sisters stared at her for a moment.

"My dear young lady—you are not alone, and

unable to speak the language?" asked the elder sister.

"Yes—you see, this is my first time abroad," said Pamela, confessing. They were really quite nice. "I was so relieved when I saw you on the platform. I hope you don't mind my coming into your carriage? What did the porter mean by repeating 'Bitter' to me?"

"*Bitte* means please. It was a polite response," explained the elder.

"You will be all right now. We shall be able to deliver you safely to your friends on arrival at Kitzburg," said the younger sister, smiling at Pamela. "How brave of you, my dear."

"Oh, I haven't any friends there!" cried Pamela. Then she told how she had seen an advertisement and had written.

"But, my dear!" exclaimed the elder sister, not hiding her amazement. "You must not think of going to such a place. You had no recommendations?"

"No—but surely—a count and countess," began Pamela.

"My dear—they sound like adventurers!"

"It may be a terrible place," cried the younger one.

"It is most unwise—you must not think of it. A count and countess advertising lodgings! Most suspicious! There are all kinds of people in Austria now," said the elder sister, warningly. "They had Communists in Vienna! Austria's become a republic. There have been terrible changes. You must go to the best hotel."

"We are so glad you told us," began the other sister. "A friend of mine who came out——"

"Jane, you had better not tell her that. It is a blessing we are in time to warn her. My dear," said

the elder, turning to Pamela, " Baedeker recommends hotels, and you are always safe if Baedeker puts a star on the hotel."

" Oh, thank you, but I think I shall be all right," said Pamela.

They looked at her. An obstinate young woman. Well, they had warned her. A silence fell. The train was making its way up an alpine valley. It was a grey, mountainous scene. The clouds were low and woolly, and combed the pine forests on the slopes. It began to rain. Spring in the Tyrol was not a bit like the poster. Pamela felt thoroughly depressed.

After almost three hours the train arrived at Kitzburg, in the darkening afternoon. The rain fell now in torrents.

The two sisters must have felt sorry for her, obstinate as she was. There was no porter about, so they helped her down with her luggage.

" Now, my dear—do be advised. Go to a good hotel. If you would like to come to Salzburg we know an excellent——"

" Oh, thank you very much, I shall be quite all right," said Pamela, gratefully.

The younger sister had scribbled something on a visiting-card.

" If you should want help—or we can do anything, that is our address at Salzburg," she said, giving Pamela the card. " Perhaps you will come to see us one day ? "

Pamela thanked them. The train moved on. The dozen or so peasants who had alighted with her had melted away. Pamela stood alone on the platform The train disappeared in the misty evening. The rain fell audibly. Everywhere there was the sound of running water. No, it was not a bit like the poster. It would be awful.

I

SINCE no one came to her on the deserted platform, Pamela passed out through an iron gate where she was the last to surrender her ticket, on to the front of the station. Here, under the sheltered entrance, she found two men propped dismally against the wall, clad in something that looked like opera cloaks and gave them a cadaverous air. A youth talking with them suddenly turned as Pamela approached.

"Schloss Edelstein?" he asked, raising his round felt hat with a feather jauntily stuck in it.

"Yes—*Ja*!" cried Pamela, in great relief. Then she was expected! She began to wonder if her letter had been received; if indeed, there was such a place as Schloss Edelstein, or such persons as Count and Countess Edelstein. It was foolish of her not to have found out more about this place. The fears of the two ladies had quite depressed her.

The youth took her bag. He, too, wore a kind of opera cloak that made him look like a conspirator. He went towards a carriage and two horses that stood steaming in the rain, and opened the door of an old-fashioned brougham. Pamela got in, reflecting how singular it was. The last and only time she had ridden in a brougham was at her grandmother's funeral. Then she went to a cemetery. Now she went to a schloss. The rain, the dark interior and the two ladies' warnings made her feel equally mournful. But something had caught her eye. On the carriage door there was a coronet. No, it wasn't like going to a funeral—it was more like Cinderella going to the ball. If Mrs. Busby could see her now!

The youth outside on the box had stirred up the horses. They jogged briskly along, making a lively

clatter on the wet road. Turning sharply to the left they began to mount steadily. From inside, scarcely darker than outside, Pamela could see very little, but after a few minutes there were lights on either side of the road. They must have entered the main street, and the size of the place surprised Pamela. There were shops, brightly lit, and a number of entrances to hotels, whose fronts were quite gaily painted beneath their overhanging roofs. They clattered under an arch, and the village appeared to straggle away into the dark country.

Evidently the schloss was outside Kitzburg. A sharp turn and they began to mount steeply up a road black with overhanging trees. A few minutes later the carriage swung through an open gateway into a courtyard, where the wheels crunched loudly on the gravel. They stopped. Pamela waited until the boy had got down and opened the door. Before her a white façade glimmered ghostly, with not a light to be seen anywhere. She shivered slightly as she stood there in the chill air, before a small wicket gate that covered the entrance porch and massive iron-studded doors. The youth pulled a chain, a bell clanged in monstrous uproar. It was like a scene from Hans Andersen. The dark woods seemed to be listening, the rain sighed. Soon the Ogre would appear.

There were footsteps crossing a stone floor, then the heavy doors swung back, and a young maid opened the wicket gate.

The youth entered with the luggage, Pamela followed. The door swung to behind them.

It was a dimly-lit hall, with a low roof, barrel-arched and borne up by massive stone piers, obviously the foundations of the castle. The barren floor was stone-flagged, the walls and ceilings whitewashed, and covered with antlers. Pamela stared in amazement,

the walls bristled with antlers. In between the massive horns, some mounted on the heads of deer, were smaller ones, of chamois and goats. There were chairs and tables whose legs were made of antlers. In niches between this spiky display, over which an old lantern threw a dim cold light, stood men in armour, visors drawn.

Pamela followed the maid down the hall, the youth had disappeared. At the end they came to a wide staircase. Down this someone came, approaching Pamela.

"Miss Kemp? You are very welcome. I hope you had a pleasant journey?"

Could this be the countess? She was young, not more than twenty-two or three, though in the dim light one could not be sure. She was slim and very fair, with flaxen hair drawn tightly back from her brow. Her accent was excellent. Pamela wondered whether she was English.

"You are Countess Edelstein?" she asked.

"Yes. Will you please to come—I will show you your room. I am so sorry it rains, you would not see the beautiful valley as you came. Karl was at the station?"

"Oh, yes—thank you."

They mounted the stairs, winding round and round More antlers, small ones, all mounted. Then old engravings and coloured prints. And still they mounted, going up through the house, with passages opening off on every hand. Finally they walked across a long landing. The countess opened a door. They entered a room with two windows, one of them in a built-out wing.

"I hope you will be comfortable. The maid will bring you some hot water. We have dinner at eight. A bell rings in the courtyard a quarter

before the hour, and one in the house when meals are served."

She smiled again at Pamela, who saw she had rosy cheeks and blue eyes. Having watched Karl bring in the luggage, she withdrew.

Pamela stood in the middle of the room, assuring herself of its reality. She was here, in a castle in the Tyrol. So far, it had not been at all like the poster, no bright sunshine, snowy peaks, alpine valleys and peasants in costume. But the countess was real, and the castle. It was immense, stoutly built and old.

The room was sparsely furnished, but with everything essential. The bed was of plain pinewood, with the figures 1707 on the headboard. What a story it could tell—of births and deaths, of the ecstatic nuptials of youth, of pain and peace.

At the side of the bed was a reading lamp. There was electric light. She could read in bed, which she loved doing. No, she could not be far from civilisation with comfort like this. In the recess was a walnut writing-table, by the other window a dressing-table. One strip of bright carpet covered the scrubbed boards. In a corner stood a huge walnut wardrobe, with scroll pillars and marquetry panels. The centre panels were carved with a coat of arms—a coronet, the same as she had seen on the carriage door, over two knights in armour, on either side of a portcullis. These must be the Edelstein arms.

The room was warm and smelt pleasantly. A pine odour, surely. The warmth was coming from the far corner of the room, which was occupied by a tall oblong stove of white glazed tiles, with, again, the Edelstein arms on a central shield.

Pamela, confronted with something she had never seen before, opened a small iron door. Pine logs

burned brightly within. That accounted for the delightful odour in the room.

It was hard to believe. Less than thirty hours ago she was in London. Now she was in her room in a castle in the Tyrol. She looked at her watch. It had stopped. She had forgotten to wind it up in the train. She wondered whether the Wheelers were comfortably settled at Lucerne, and the young couple. The Prince would be still travelling. She was sorry about the Prince. She was sure he meant to be kind. People really were too suspicious. Those two Salzburg ladies, for instance. They had tried to frighten her to death.

There was a tap on the door. Pamela started. Her heart beat quicker. The count? What nonsense! The count wouldn't come to her room—it would be the countess.

"Come in!" she called.

But no one came in. She went to the door and opened it. A maid stood there, with a jug of hot water in her hand.

"Oh—thank you. Come in. Can you tell me the time?"

"*Bitte?*" said the maid, depositing the jug.

"Can you tell me the time, please?"

The maid smiled and said something Pamela could not understand. They looked at each other, baffled. Then they both laughed. The girl withdrew.

Everything in Austria was Bitter—no, of course it meant "Please."

She must really learn German, and French also, for travelling in France. They were quite essential.

What nonsense she was talking! When was she going to travel in France? In five weeks she would be back in London, desperately searching for work.

"Pamela, my dear—you must come down to earth," she said to herself, but the words in no way dismayed her. People talked about castles in Spain. Well, her castle had come true, though it was in the Tyrol.

Suddenly a bell clanged. Her nerves must be very much on edge to make her start like that. It was the bell outside, of which the countess had spoken. Only a quarter of an hour to dress! Yes, her nerves were jumpy. She badly needed a holiday.

Dressing rapidly, Pamela glanced into the mirror. She wondered how many would be at dinner, and what the count would be like. The young countess was charming.

Another bell rang, in the house. That was for dinner. Pamela glanced at her portmanteau and dressing-case. Should she? It seemed very mean. But the two ladies had travelled a lot, and knew the world.

Pamela locked her two bags. You never knew, really. It might not be their castle at all. They might be a bogus count and countess. Charming people were often the most unscrupulous. Charm was their great asset.

Suppressing a feeling of meanness, and blaming the two ladies, Pamela began the descent of the stairs.

II

The countess greeted Pamela as she entered the dining-room. It was a long room hung with family portraits. They seemed to stand dimly around, as if watching with curiosity the people at the table—ambassadors and statesmen in wigs and scarlet robes, soldiers in shining armour, courtiers in splendid attire, ladies of high fashion, according to the mode of

the centuries. Were they all Edelsteins? Pamela thought she could see a likeness between them and the countess. But, of course, she was wrong, since the countess was only an Edelstein by marriage.

To her surprise there were about a dozen persons sitting at the table. One end, where the countess presided, spoke English, the other end German. Were they all members of the family or were these other guests? Opposite sat a middle-aged lady. She must be English, thought Pamela; there was no mistaking her origin. Her white hair was carefully built up over her head and ended in a severe bun, tied round with a thin piece of black velvet, with a clasp of brilliants. Her cheeks were rosy, her eyes keen, but the large front teeth were yellow, with receded gums. Her mouth was large and severe. The high collar of her bodice failed to hide a shrunken long neck. She sat stiffly in her chair. It seemed impossible she could ever bend. Her speech was like that, sparse, proper. She took her time with everything, expressing her opinion and eating her food. She had beautifully kept hands, expensively ringed.

Yes, here was the type she had read about. This was the well-preserved Englishwoman to be found in the hotels and *pensions* of Europe. Her brother would be a colonel somewhere in India, her sister would live in Knightsbridge. She had a restricted, if comfortable, private income.

"Is this your first time in the Tyrol, Miss Kemp?" she asked.

That was like her. She had fastened on her name when introduced, whereas Pamela had not heard any of their names in the confusion she felt.

"Yes—I have always wished to see it," she said.

"You will come often now—I have lived here three

years—not here, but in various parts of Austria. It is beautiful. Mademoiselle Dupont said I would never leave. She was right."

"Mademoiselle is our governess—she came here thirty-eight years ago and has never left us," explained the countess.

"She was so loyal to you during the war," said the English lady, smiling.

"Poor Ma'm'selle—she suffered terribly," said the countess, looking fondly across at the stout old lady at the far end of the table.

So that was the governess. Then had the countess children, or was Ma'm'selle a family retainer from past generations? Pamela looked at the old lady. She was robust and filled the far end of the table where she talked quickly in German to two ladies. Her hair was still dark, but her skin had sagged with age. Black eyes flashed in that flabby face. A real character, thought Pamela.

"Did you go for a walk, Lady Prudence?" asked a voice down the table. "I've been in the town. I hear we're having *platzmusik* to-morrow night."

So she was Lady Prudence. What a suitable name for such an aristocratic, stiff old thing.

"What is *platzmusik*?" asked Pamela, determined not to be frightened by the overpowering presence of Lady Prudence.

"It's the town band, they play in their old costumes—you will like them," said the countess. "Everyone falls in love with the old conductor—but you must not make Ma'm'selle jealous!"

"She is most jealous!" laughed Lady Prudence. "I dare not look at the poor man!"

"What ees zat?" cried Mademoiselle Dupont, from the end of the table. "You take my name for somesing?"

" We are discussing your affair with the bandmaster, my dear," said the countess.

" Ah—it ees vair cruel ! He has a wife and seex childrens. Such deer, deer childrens ! You would not so laugh at me eef Count Hugo was here. He would protect my charactair ! " cried Mademoiselle.

Count Hugo—that must be Count Hugo Edelstein. Where was he ? There was only one man at the table. It would be rather dull with all these old ladies, thought Pamela. They had so thoroughly let down their anchors in this comfortable harbour. Most comfortable—and most excellent food. She had never tasted anything so delicious before. They had a very good cook.

Where was the count ? She hoped he wasn't away. The count and countess—ran the advertisement. Since the countess was so young—and really charming in her girlish, friendly way—the count would be young. No—he might have married a girl-wife. Men did that, though she had a prejudice against such men. She hoped the count was young, and attractive.

Whatever was she thinking ? What could it matter how old or young the count was. He had a wife, and in any case he could be nothing to her, not even a good companion. She would be the first to resent any familiarity on his part.

The dinner went on. They talked of travel, bridge, the prices of things in the town, the cost of living in Vienna, Christmas in Cairo and the rain. The wet weather would not last. The Königsberg had cleared at sunset. It was always a sign of good weather when the Königsberg was clear.

" You would not see it this evening. It is a mountain range that dominates—do you say so ?—the valley," explained the countess. " Yes—it will be fine to-morrow ! "

They rose and went into the drawing-room. More portraits on the walls. Count Leopold, Ambassador to Their Majesties, at Rome; Count Karl, Ambassador to His Majesty, in London. That must have been in the time of Queen Elizabeth, judging from the costume. There was a magnificent gentleman in scarlet robes, holding a scroll, and pointing to a map with a long delicate finger. A Governor of some country for his Emperor. In another recess a Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, with his mitre and crook. All Edelsteins. Then they were the real thing. The two ladies in the train were wrong, dreadfully wrong. Owing to their suspicions she had locked her bags. She felt thoroughly ashamed of herself.

The countess poured out coffee. Pamela sat down, underneath another splendid gentleman. He was tremendously impressive in a peruke, decorations on his breast, orders hanging from his neck, lace-ruffled hand delicately resting on a jewelled sword-hilt. The inscription was in German, but Pamela made out a little of it. A Lord-Chamberlain to His Imperial Majesty, a Cavalier of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Count of Edelstein, Baron of Ortensia, and something—something of the Hereditary Lands of somewhere. It was amazing.

She looked across the room and was still more amazed, and a little puzzled. Two enormous portraits dominated the far wall. They were of men in voluminous scarlet robes, with jewelled crosses hung from their necks, and small red caps on their heads. In the top corner of each portrait there was a red hat, with five tassels on a cord hanging from both sides of the flat brim. With a sense of pleasure at her intelligence, Pamela suddenly realised what these hats meant. They were cardinals!

Prince-bishops, cardinals, ambassadors, lord-chamberlains, through five hundred years of history, in which they had played such high rôles, and she had locked her portmanteau! Those old women in the train were ridiculous. Count Edelstein must be very proud of his family. She hoped he looked aristocratic, worthy of this descent. She had once seen an English duke, and was dismayed. He looked like a farm labourer and was bow-legged. It would be awful if Count Hugo were bow-legged. She liked men with good legs.

And how sad to see this fine old family fallen on evil days. It must have been the war. It had done monstrous things to our civilisation. It had turned Society women into gossip writers, fine mansions into week-end hotels, and mixed up the classes so that Russian princes drove taxicabs in Paris and Chicago meat-packers married throneless queens. Pamela knew all this had happened, but the change had never touched her personally. Now she saw it with her own eyes, and it made her unhappy.

Pamela found herself sitting next to Lady Prudence.

"Your name is Miss Kemp, I believe—do you happen to be one of the Keedon-Kemps?"

What impertinence and inquisitiveness, thought Pamela. She was to be labelled at once. Well, she wouldn't. The woman deserved a lie and she would get it.

"Yes—I'm distantly related—do you know them?" asked Pamela. The moment she had said it she regretted the lie. How foolish of her to let this woman frighten her into an untruth, which would soon be found out. Who were the Keedon-Kemps? She had never heard of them.

"My cousin married one of them a little while ago.

Lord Brantchester's daughter, Phyllis. Such a charming girl," said Lady Prudence, opening an unnecessary fan.

Good heavens, thought Pamela, she had put herself into a peerage.

"I am only very distantly related, and scarcely know them," said Pamela.

"Oh!" said Lady Prudence. She began a conversation with the lady on her left.

That woman knows I'm a liar, thought Pamela. The first evening of her new life, and she had made a bad slip.

They were playing bridge now. Two of the ladies were reading. Another worked a piece of embroidery stretched on a frame.

"What beautiful work!" said Pamela.

"Do you like it?" asked the lady, looking up from the frame, over which she was bent. "I began it in Cairo last Christmas, then I went to Greece, and Sicily, and North Africa, and then Italy, so I got very little done. But I seem stuck here, so perhaps I'll finish it now."

She drew out her needle. Pamela examined her. A woman of the world this. She was about fifty, with a most determined face and an incisive way of speaking.

"How wonderful it must be to travel so much," observed Pamela.

"Wonderful? Why, my dear, I loathe travelling. I'm now incapable of staying anywhere for two months and am a complete guide to the hotels and *pensions* of Europe."

She gave the stretched canvas a vicious stab with her needle and compressed her lips.

"But why do you do it if you don't like it?"

"To get away from myself," she answered at

once. "My name's Miss Bennett—does that give you any clue?"

"No," said Pamela, a little bewildered.

"*Miss* Bennett," she replied. "I'm one of those persons you read about in novels—I'm an old maid, embittered by an unsuccessful love affair. I travel to get away from myself, and can't."

Pamela laughed. There was something very humorous about Miss Bennett.

A gentleman reading a newspaper looked across at them.

"I must warn you," he said, addressing Pamela, "not to believe a word Miss Bennett says. There's an established legend in India that she made more young men unhappy by her stern refusals than any other woman. And now the poor count's pining away."

"The count's a darling—but he flirts with everyone, Mr. Crawley," said Miss Bennett. "As for my past in India, well, I'm being punished now."

"Where is the count?" asked Pamela.

"He wasn't at dinner to-night. He's out motoring. Gone to Zell-am-See, up the valley. You must go there. The count turns every woman's head."

"He won't turn mine," said Pamela.

"You'll see," smiled Miss Bennett. "He turned mine in five minutes. He's dangerously handsome."

"I don't like handsome men," retorted Pamela, firmly. She thoroughly disliked the count already. She hated flirtatious men, and married ones were abominable. What an awful thing for his wife. She was charming, poor girl.

"Well, in any event, you'll find Schloss Edelstein delightful. I've been here a month. Quite a record for me, my dear. And I look like being here another two. The food's wonderful. Good food's the last

pleasure life's left me," said Miss Bennett, easing herself in her chair.

Pamela saw she was well-nourished. Travelling had not thinned her. Almost three chins, but very jolly, nevertheless.

" No—that's not quite true. I've one other vice," she continued, carefully embroidering all the time. " Reading in bed. I read a fresh detective story every night. A low taste, my dear—but, then, I've no brains ! "

" I'm sure you have," declared Pamela. " You'll not make me believe that."

" Thank you, my dear, but your faith's useless. No. I've sense, lots of hard sense. I'd have been happier with less. When I was twenty I already knew what it would be like to be fifty, with the result that I've never been really young. A sensible woman's a drug in the marriage mart. You see, I'm back to marriage again ! "

Miss Bennett rolled up her silk thread, and put the frame aside.

" We all go to bed early here," she said, rising. " Where are you sleeping ? "

" On the top floor, I think. It seemed the top—in a corner room on the right," answered Pamela.

" Oh, I know. You're next to the Genius ! "

" Who ? "

" The Genius. A Lady Who Writes," emphasised Miss Bennett.

" Where did she sit at dinner ? " asked Pamela. She had never met an author in the flesh. It really was a wonderful house, with cardinals and ambassadors on the walls, with the countess and Lady Prudence, and Miss Bennett, who was quite unique. And, now, a writer.

" Dinner ! You don't expect a genius to eat dinner

with us! Wasn't it Lord Byron who travelled with a screen and ate all his meals behind it? Someone not quite balanced, who wrote, I'm sure."

Mr. Crawley again put down his paper.

"I can't think why you're so severe on those poor authors, Miss Bennett. Some of them can be normal, I believe."

"The normal ones are no good, my dear Mr. Crawley. I have a cousin who writes. But she's most respectable—and so are her books. No one can read them."

The door opened, a young man came in. Pamela's heart gave a little leap. It was the count!

He stood at the end of the drawing-room for a moment, under the Venetian glass chandelier. He was handsome in a way that only a foreigner could be handsome. Dark, not fair as she had expected, with black hair low on the brow, and eyebrows that ran in a clean perfect arch over the most arresting eyes. He was olive skinned, with features so flawless that a sculptor might have cut them in the heroic style.

He moved away, into the other wing of the drawing-room.

"He is handsome," admitted Pamela, to Miss Bennett.

"And odious. I feel ill in his presence!"

Miss Bennett glared in the direction he had gone.

"I thought you found him very attractive?" asked Pamela, surprised at her change of front.

"Him! That's not the count, my dear. He's all the airs of one, I'll admit. That's the secretary to the Lady Who Writes. We all have nothing better to do here than to pry into each other's lives, wondering what kind of help the Genius derives from a young Italian, a too-young and too-handsome Italian whose

English is quite unintelligible. Now, I'm going. I've given you quite enough scandal to go to bed with. Good night."

Miss Bennett gathered together spectacles, embroidery and hand-bag, and left the room. Pamela liked her. She had spirit.

The bridge players were retiring too. The young Italian had left the room with a book in his hand. Who could this authoress be, who came with a secretary and dined in private ?

Bidding Mr. Crawley good night, Pamela went up to her room. From her window she saw a line of lights below her. That was the town in the valley, through which she had been driven. It was still raining heavily. That poster in Aldgate Station was probably like all other posters. She had paid seventeen pounds merely to see it rain in another place.

VIII COUNT HUGO

Count Hugo Edelstein, whose failure to appear at dinner had aroused almost a fever of curiosity in Pamela's heart, was a young man whom everybody liked. With his dark brown hair and tanned face, in which a pair of sharp eyes looked at life with amusement, he was attractive in a way that made people happy. No one, hearing his gay voice and watching his boyish demeanour, would have credited him with a tragic history and a ruined inheritance. Yet he was old enough to have seen the wreckage of a great Empire and to have known real hunger. His elder brother had died on the heights overlooking Cortina, where an army, with ruin and revolution behind it, had watched Italy sweep into its native valley. He had

seen the family estates stripped of their revenues, his ancestral house denuded, levy by levy, of its finest possessions. Finally, starving in Vienna, where his mother had died because she no longer had any desire to live, had come the final blow, the appalling end of his sister in Budapest—a thing not to be spoken of in his hearing.

Yet we meet him, whistling, at eight o'clock in the morning, as he cycles into the courtyard of his home. He has been down to the lake thus early for his morning swim. His eye catches a dark patch where the plaster has fallen from the outside wall of the schloss. Everything seems falling these days—old families, old traditions, roofs, walls and ceilings. There are moments when, confronted with a new expense, fresh leading of the roofs, pointing of the brickwork, new drains or gates, he almost gives up the fight. Why cling to this enfeebled inheritance whose faded splendour mocks at his necessitous present ? But no, there is something more than tradition, love of the old place of his ancestors, five hundred years of lordship in the valley of his birth, that holds him. He will not be beaten. He is an Edelstein, this is the castle of the Edelsteins.

In the chapel there, by the gates, behind the wrought-iron grilles, under recumbent marble and stone effigies, sleep his ancestors. There lies the Edelstein who marched with Charles into Tuscany and Piedmont, the Edelstein who wore the tasselled hat in Rome, the Edelstein who fought in the First Crusade, was wrecked with Richard Cœur de Lion, and took to wife a daughter of the Duke of Burgundy. They lie there, mercifully spared the knowledge of these days, their wives at their sides, whose splendid quarterings on the chiselled shields speak of unions with the great families of Europe.

And with them lies the one who had witnessed the deed that had shattered the Empire and the reign of the House of Habsburg, Count Franz Edelstein, a gentleman of the Court of the Emperor Francis Joseph. He had stood by his master when the Imperial hand had signed the decree that drenched Europe in blood. His heart had been heavy then, apprehensive of this punishment of a truculent Serbia. It had broken, four years later, when his son Karl crimsoned the Alpine snows, where the wings of the eagle were broken at last.

Count Hugo had the happy Austrian temperament. The storm blackens the heights, but by morning the heavy clouds lift, the sun shines. It is glad day again in the Tyrol valley. So with the young count. If he thought about things he would have no courage to continue. But he did not think. Sufficient for the day was the problem, and he tackled it with all the vigour of his twenty-five years.

It was their old friend's idea to turn the family castle into a private hotel. But for faithful Ian Crawley, Schloss Edelstein would have stood empty, damp, dismal. One servant came back from the aftermath of war. She wanted no wages. There was no home for her outside the Edelstein household, which her family had served for six generations. She became housekeeper, cook, parlour-maid, gardener and poultry-keeper. She sat alone in the vast servants' hall where, in other days, there had been thirty of them filling the place with cheerful noise. Half of the menservants were dead on the heights of their ravished territory, or maimed for life. Hosts, guests, servants, all who had made those rooms bright with work and laughter were now scattered, broken in heart and fortune.

But Elise came back. She fought a losing battle

with cobwebs and dust, as the count fought a losing battle with taxes and cost of upkeep. It was then, at the suggestion of Ian Crawley, their faithful English friend of happy pre-war days, that Hugo saw light in the darkness. "Why not convert your empty castle into an hotel?" asked the Englishman, seeing Hugo in Vienna, where he directed the vast enterprise that fed thousands of starving Austrian children in those dark days of the aftermath. "You have an ideal position, a marvellous old place, splendid shooting, climbing, fishing, swimming and tennis. And in winter the ski-ing is unrivalled."

"But will they come?—we are a defeated race. There is rancour against us."

"Not against the Austrians. You should know that, Hugo. And surely this folly of men has spent itself. We are all fighting our way back to sanity. The Austrians and the English have always had much in common. You are lighter than the Germans—we understand each other. Your traditions hold our admiration. Yes, my dear Hugo, the English will come back to your beautiful Tyrol—if you will have us."

Count Hugo looked up eagerly as they sat outside a café on the Ringstrasse, where the sunshine filtered through spring leaves.

"Our traditions—there's nothing left of them! The Court exiled, with Socialists in power here, our nobility scattered to the winds and starving in back bedrooms—you mustn't speak of traditions here, my good friend."

Ian Crawley put his hand on the young man's shoulder and looked at him squarely in the face, smiling as he spoke.

"I have known your family since boyhood. I've moved in your circle, and I've learned one thing, of which I'm sure," he said.

" Which is ? "

" Your traditions are unbreakable—your resurrection inevitable."

" You are too kind, Ian," said the boy, sadly. " You believe what you wish to be true. How can I think that—with our archdukes driving taxis and working as clerks, our finest women turned into governesses, housemaids, teachers of language—and —my God, you know, Ian !—worse—worse ! "

They were silent awhile then. They could not speak of this ruin of an Empire. Crawley thought of the old Princess Theresa, glad to give lessons in French, German, Spanish and Italian, all of which she spoke fluently, for three schillings an hour—once the mistress of seven castles and a lady-in-waiting of the Royal Bedchamber.

" There's something in your idea, Ian," said Hugo, at last. " But how shall I begin ? "

" There are your friends in England. We can let one another know. There is a young generation that wants to travel. And—if the suggestion does not hurt you, and you must forgive me—you could advertise."

" I've no pride of that kind—we're all working now. We must and we should," said young Hugo. " There's that in it—we're all down together. You remember old Count Max—proud as Lucifer—young Max is running a motor business with Prince Xavier. They've let Schloss Sielan. The old boy would have died of shame—he died of hunger actually, which I'm sure he preferred. No, Ian. Bread's our first necessity. Birth's a handicap these days."

" Neither of us believe that—we are caught in a vortex, that's all."

" Count Hugo Edelstein, hotel-keeper. Steam-heating and running water in every room. My God—

there's neither! Everything's fusty. But it's an idea. It'll keep the old place aired."

"It will do more than that, I hope," said Crawley.

"What do you mean?"

"It will earn its own independence—and yours. Then you can close its gates on the world."

It was an idea. Ian had almost driven him into it, so diffident of success was he. But the dear fellow was being proved right. This was the third year, and they were booked up for the summer, with a most healthy winter list. There were now paying guests, where once the castle had held only guests whose names stood for the fashion of Europe. There were things that jarred, but there was money that jingled. And some of them had proved charming—sensitive to the atmosphere, sympathetic towards his fight.

The old castle, too, had not taken the change badly. It was filled with cheerful voices, its rooms inhabited, its staircases creaking again under human feet, its salons once more experiencing the soft presence of gowned women, white-shirted men, scent, cigars, cards, music, gossip—all the things that made houses human. There were moments when Hugo felt that his ancestors, even the prince-archbishop approved. After all, there had been that scandal over the grand-duke's daughter. Red blood had run under his crimson vestments. And the cardinals seemed to smile. It was good to hear laughter in the house, feminine laughter.

Count Hugo leaned his cycle against the door and went into the lower hall, whose antlers had surprised the new guest overnight. He found the countess in the gun-room, which had been converted into an office. She was having her morning conference with Elise, a happy, buxom Elise these days, with a hand-

ful of cheerful girls to manage in the kitchens. Count Hugo greeted her and went to his table in one corner. Seating himself he lifted a leather cover off the typewriter. It pleased him to sit before the machine. It stood for business, and business was good. He liked the noise it made. It told guests that they could have rooms. It clattered with a sense of prosperity. The prosperity that, as wise old Ian had prophesied, would one day mean independence for Schloss Edelstein and the young heir of a fallen house. As the cook went out, Hugo turned to the countess.

"Anna, we'll manage without Baron Kneller, after all. Ian wants to lend us the money. I told him yesterday we could pay back that thousand pounds he had lent us to start with. He said he'd rather we used it for the railway and kept Kneller out—he doesn't like him. So I've accepted."

"Ian is too good to us, Hugo," said Anna Edelstein, rising and picking up the keys of the linen cupboards. "But I'm glad you accepted. Kneller is our evil genius."

"We've exorcised him now, my dear!" laughed Hugo, but something ir the fair young face above him caused him to check his laughter. "Well—what's worrying you now, Anna?"

"That railway. Oh, Hugo, it's a terrible speculation! If it doesn't succeed?"

"It will—it will be an enormous success. The engineer told Kneller it was one of the finest aerial railways he'd built. That's what made Kneller so eager. He'd cut the cables if he could!"

"He might!"

"Nonsense, my dear. You can't cut steel cables like that. Besides, Kneller isn't so bad!"

"He's an evil man, Hugo, and he hates us," said the countess, quietly.

Hugo got up and took the face of the girl between his hands.

"Anna, when will you cease to think that black Fate will always dog us? Ian believes in the railway. He thinks it will be an enormous success. Think of the ski-ers who'll use it, as well as summer tourists!"

"But we've put everything in it!"

"Yes, everything—more even. Ian's in it now. You believe in Ian?"

"He is very good—and too generous, Hugo," she answered, cautiously. His easy optimism made her afraid. She had seen it leap to disaster so often.

"Now off you go!" he said, patting her on each cheek.

But in the doorway she turned.

"Oh—that Miss Kemp arrived last night," she said.

"Well?"

They always said "Well?" to each other. The types were so various.

"She looks a quiet English girl. I think she has character," said Anna.

"What's Lady Pru's verdict?"

If they passed that social test they were secure.

"I don't know yet!" laughed Anna. "In any case, she's not the kind of girl who would let Lady Prudence frighten her."

"She's a good sort, Anna—she looks like an iceberg, but her heart's as soft as butter," said Hugo. "I like Aunt Pru!"

He resumed his typing. Anna went out. He wished she was not so pessimistic about things. He hadn't dared to tell her how deeply he had plunged into this railway. He had mortgaged the home farm, the last piece of their lands left to them. There was also the bank's overdraft, and Ian Crawley's thousand

pounds. He had lent them that at the beginning when his suggestion of turning the castle into a guest-house had been followed. That was three years ago, and the venture had been a great success. Already they had made enough to pay back Ian for the cost of furnishing the extra bedrooms and the general household alterations. Also they had bought the car. There were good profits in the excursion business. A thousand pounds in three years, with a living for Anna and himself, and the castle kept in habitable condition—it was a gratifying result. And better was to come, they were well-booked for the winter season, at increased rates.

The railway would cost twenty thousand pounds. He had taken a half share, the rest being subscribed by two friends in Vienna. It had now been six months under construction. In a month it would be completed, in time for the full summer season. Its construction fascinated him.

He could see it now as he sat at his desk. A clearing had been cut through the pine forest on the lower slopes. A shaven track rose up the precipitous face of the Kitzberg. At intervals there were concrete standards, bearing the steel cables, that shone now as they caught the morning sun. The lifting mists of what promised to be a perfect day obscured the summit of the Kitzberg, where the final station had been completed. It was a chalet-like construction, of concrete and pinewood, with a landing platform and car shed. Over these was a restaurant with balconies giving superb views of the Alpine valley and the great snow-capped ranges of the Alps. Yes, there was money in the thing—a fortune probably. That was what made Kneller, who had a finger in everything, want to get in this railway. Well, it was a dirty finger, and he was not going to touch it.

There was a tap on the door, repeated when the noise of the typewriter drowned the first tapping.

"Come in!" shouted Hugo, sitting back in his chair.

The door opened and a man walked in. He had been the only man in the drawing-room the previous evening, whom Pamela had heard addressed as Mr. Crawley. He talked very little, but at once she had felt he was one of those rare creatures born to justify the ways of God with man. There was kindness in his grey eyes, which were cold until he smiled. His mouth, thin and straight, was that of a clever and, possibly, irritable man, that is, it closed firmly and was part of an ascetic face, imperious in expression. He had the kind of face portrait painters found a delight in discovering, for it had surprising subtleties, not observable by the casual eye. His black hair, glossy and ample, but severely cut, covered him like a black casque, coming to a point in the centre of the low broad brow. His age could not have been more than thirty-five, physically judged. But there was that in the lines and modelling of the face, particularly the wrinkles lying around the deep-set eyes, which told of years of sensitive receptivity. Time had written her record not by hours but emotions. A grave, quiet nature, matched with a speech perhaps too solemn with an impress of thought, subdued the youth that should still have shone from him. A man of tragedy somehow, but not embittered, with a nature genial without lightness and warm without sunniness. It was felt the years had done something to him, and few tremendous years they must have been, to have scored so heavily a man whose youth was not so much passed as shadowed.

"Hello, Ian! How early you are," cried Count Hugo, jumping up.

"I'm industrious these days—I was working at seven," answered the elder man. He glanced around the room, and seated himself on the deep window embrasure in which a sunlit landscape of mountain and pinewood was framed. "I waited up for you last night, but in vain. I've news for you, Hugo. I hear Kneller has formed a syndicate to run a rack and pinion railway up the Königsberg. That's his answer to your refusal of partnership."

Crawley looked at the young man as he stood there, his legs braced, both hands in the pockets of his leather shorts. Hugo grinned at him.

"Bluff! I don't believe a word of it, Ian," he said. But there was a question in his glance that a little belied his easy confidence.

"Neither do I," replied Crawley, quietly. "A railway up the Königsberg would cost something like one hundred thousand pounds—three million five hundred thousand schillings, in your money."

"There's not that much money in Austria these days," laughed Count Hugo, lighting a cigarette and sweeping back the hair from his eyes with a nervous brown hand.

"I don't believe the story," said Crawley, "because a railway costing that much could never pay. But it does show that Kneller is incensed, or he would not take the trouble to propagate such a rumour. Frankly, Hugo, that fellow means mischief. I don't like it."

Hugo laughed and sat down, crossing his tanned legs. He was an ingenuous boy. Too much of a boy, thought Crawley, observing the young head thrown back in contemplation of the ceiling.

"Ian—I didn't believe it of you—you're like Anna. If ever she gives birth to a baby I fear the Kneller impress on its innocent face, she's so much under the

spell of Kitzburg's evil genius. Come now, have you other news, more cheerful? Otherwise I shall deplore this early rising."

"Yes—there is cheerful news amid all these rumours of ruin and vengeance, but I'm not sure you are the person to hear it," said Crawley, smiling in that tantalising, suppressed way of his.

"And it is——?" asked Count Hugo, after a pause that promised no finality.

"Last night there arrived a splendid example of England's womanhood," said Crawley.

Count Hugo groaned. He knew those examples.

"Like the Genius, I'm going to insist on my meals in private," he said, firmly.

"Patience, Hugo. This is not of the Prudence pattern. A rose, my dear boy—a simple English rose. Twenty-five, crimson-lipped, dewy-eyed, and oh, so new to everything, so filled with delightful wonder!"

Hugo sat up and looked at his friend with merry eyes. A rebellious lock of hair fell, obscuring his brow. The eyes of a faun danced for a moment in high anticipation.

"Ian—you're tantalising me! You know my weakness," he cried, laughing, and picking up a paper-knife to play with. "I will not be tempted. I'm an hotel-keeper. I shall keep my place."

"That's what I want—and why I am telling you. Hugo, this girl's the frailest porcelain. Be merciful," said Crawley.

Count Hugo burst into laughter, jumped up from his chair and wedged himself into the window-seat beside Crawley, slipping an arm through his.

"Ian, you old brute! Everything you say just sets me on fire. But I know it's all humbug. I'm prepared for a lady with splay-feet and tortoiseshell spectacles. I say, just look at that!"

He turned in the window-seat. Crawley followed his hand. It pointed to the Kitzberg. The mists had lifted now, revealing its lower slopes thickly clad with pines. Higher, in the clearings were the small chalets of the farmers, and above the slopes they had shaved smooth with generations of labour, shone the bright pasture lands where their well-nourished cattle strayed. Higher still, beyond trees and bushes, the face of the mountain, scored and arid as a desert, soared to those stiller heights where the winter snows lingered, heavy in the northern rifts, since no sunshine wasted them. And above all, faintly remote, unblemished and radiant, the white summit towered like an iceberg in the blue sea of heaven's morning.

Yet man was there, his sign of conquest upon it. The thing to which Hugo Edelstein pointed was no more than a black speck, less than a bird's shape alighting on that white wilderness. It was the terminal station of the railway, and in the eyes of the young man the very peak of his ambition.

Half-way up the mountain their eyes could trace the thin cables with their supporting standards, that held the summit in subjection, but beyond, the track was lost in the heights. Across the valley, as they looked, came the sound of blows rhythmically dealt, heard with that clarity of mountain regions where the whole valley is as a sounding board to whatever breaks the high silence.

"They'll finish the last standard this morning—to-morrow they'll have the telephone through. Think of it, Ian—we'll be able to talk from the top of the old Kitzberg!" cried the ecstatic young man.

He leapt from the window, his eyes bright with the consummation of his dream.

"It'll pay for itself in five years, and after that

we'll have a clear profit. And think of the ski-ers it'll bring here every winter! We'll build an annex to the schloss. We could take sixty guests then. And I've other places—a new hotel down in Kitsburg —beyond the station, with a view of the lower valley. Ian—we're made!"

He spread out his hands, shook back his hair bleached by the strong sunlight, a figure of youth dreaming magnificent dreams.

"And what's to become of the ancient house of Edelstein? You depress me a little, Hugo," said Crawley, observing his young friend.

"How?" asked the young man, surprised.

"I hear money-lust in your voice."

"Oh that! Money! Yes, I want money. Lots of money! That is all there is in the world to-day!" he cried, almost fiercely. "It conquers everything. It saves one from humiliation, it gives one liberty. The New World has found that out—America knows it. The whole world knows it. Everything else is just the upholstery it can purchase!"

"Dear me!" said Crawley, getting down from his seat. "This sounds like the end of the house of Edelstein. If you were not twenty-five and only meant what you said while you said it, I should feel unhappy."

"That's unkind, Ian. I do mean what I say. Money is the one essential thing to-day. One must have it. Can you deny that?" asked the young man.

"Yes. I can deny it a thousand times, with a thousand examples under our very eyes. Look at those chalets. There are men and women living in them, who live by labour and cannot say what the next year—the next months even—will bring them. Their lives are at the mercy of the seasons, which can

feed or starve them. But when I look at them their eyes are clean and abashless. The very lines of their bodies, bent in a long battle for little rewards, proclaim independence. They have children shouting about them, flowers in their windows, a smell of scrubbed boards in their chalets—and you talk to me of the power of money! My dear foolish boy—there's never been money in the lives of these people for a thousand years. That is why they are the splendid creatures they are. The day money comes they'll be a debased race of serfs. Take care what you do to them, Hugo."

The young man stared at his friend, startled by this sudden passion evoked by his careless words. It was a Crawley he did not often see, a little fanatical perhaps, but rather a splendid fellow in his fierce sincerity. And deep within him, a little ashamed of the light betrayal of his inheritance, Hugo knew Crawley was right. The unbreakable pride of race, whose flame burnt constantly if fitfully in these days of difficulty and assault, leapt up again at the words of his friend. He felt ashamed. What was life doing to him that a man of alien race must remind him of his own tradition? The war—God, what things the war had done to men! What it had left unbroken it was now undermining with a base creed of opportunism—to which he, too, was succumbing.

"I say, Ian—you mustn't take me too seriously, please—you know I don't mean what I say—not all of it," said Hugo, contritely, all his swift arrogance of ambition vanished.

"I know you don't—and for that reason I don't like to hear you talk in this fashion. Make money your slave, if you will, but not your god. An old-fashioned doctrine, Hugo—but not a bad one, believe me."

The door opened. It was the Countess Anna.

"Come in, Anna," cried Hugo, putting his arm around her. "I've had a thorough trouncing from Ian—and deserved it. He thinks I'm bitten by the money-bug. He doesn't like my cable railway because its going to vulgarise us with riches!"

"Ian is right," said Anna, quietly, looking from one to the other. "Do you know, Ian, that railway frightens me? We're seeking too much, too quickly. We should be content as we are—all is going so well. One shouldn't ask too much of Fate."

"There!" cried Hugo, tightening his arm about her. "Between you, I shall not have a spark of ambition left. In a moment I shall sit down, despondent, reconciled to an inheritance of cobwebs and falling plaster!"

"I've come," said Anna, with a serious face, "for you to go and see the Genius. We've had a fearful scene and I've fled. I stood at the foot of her bed while she lectured me like a naughty child. The milk served with her coffee had skin on it. The hot water runs too slowly into her bath. At this point her secretary came in, clad in crimson pyjamas and a dressing-gown embossed with rampant leopards. Didn't we understand that Madame Baker was a Genius, a Great Genius? All the world awaited her new book, and she was being tortured, yes, tortured. The saw-mill down in the valley sawed just to annoy her. It was insupportable. Then the Genius began again. If we want to run this place with any success we must——"

"My dear Anna—tell the woman to go," interrupted Crawley. "You mustn't allow people to talk to you like this."

"She won't go, Ian. She's getting on my nerves," said Anna. "Elise says all the maids shake when her

bell goes. Last night she threw the chicken at Greta —said it was cold."

"Good heavens—the woman's mad! She must go," exclaimed Crawley. "Hugo, go and deal with her—this is no job for Anna."

"Deal with her!" cried Hugo. "My dear fellow, you can't imagine what a terror she is. We've a pitched battle twice a week. I nearly threw her dago out of the window last time. Well, I feel pugnacious this morning. You'll see the body hurtling past this window in the good old way of Schloss Edelstein. But I do wish that woman wouldn't conduct her interviews in bed. She's such an infernal advantage over one, and she knows it. If you were a painter, Ian, this might inspire a mural decoration, like those in the Doges Palace at Venice—'Count Hugo Edelstein subduing Genius Enthroned.'"

He went out laughing. It was all in the day's work of an hotel-keeper. Yesterday there had been battle with the baker in the town. To-day it was battle with the Baker in bed.

IX GENIUS

PAMELA, waking, found the room dark. Was it five or six, or later? She switched on the light and looked at her wrist-watch lying on the bedside table. Nine o'clock! She had slept ten hours!

But why was the room so dark! Surely it was light in the Tyrol by nine in the morning! Getting out of bed, she went to the windows and found the cause. The shutters beyond the glass windows were closed. She threw them open.

"Oh!" exclaimed Pamela, involuntarily.

It was Spring in the Tyrol.

It could not be true, of course. Her brain would not accept what her eyes saw. Never had morning been so glad, the earth so fair. Like Pippa, she wanted to sing, for most surely God was in Heaven and all was right with the world. No, the poster hadn't lied. It couldn't, however coloured and sunny it strived to be. The scene before her was beyond the mind's imagining, beyond all expression.

Before her rose, immense, the king of heaven, the Kitzberg, his vast range shouldering the sky, his regal brow snow-crowned, with a million scintillations breaking from his stainless diadem. And on all the lower slopes, along the ravines, around the friendly foothills, clustered the woodlands, pine woodlands, dark, massed as an army on that upward march from the farm and pasture lands. Here and there a mountain ledge broke the skyline, with its chalets perilously perched on their precipitous edges, or deftly lodged in some fold that offered shelter. Could those chalets be real? It was hard not to believe they were only toy chalets in and out of which, prophets of the weather, a man and woman would appear and disappear.

Clear in the morning came the noise of running water. Everywhere it rose. She had heard it last night; then it had depressed her, but this morning it was the song of Nature, a voice from sunny uplands, friendly, cheerful. And above that voice came something that thrilled her anew. They were cowbells tinkling somewhere. With that the picture was complete. Her child's vision, born in that show at the exhibition, was fulfilled here, miraculously. Was this the dream, or that?

Footsteps below drew Pamela's attention. It was

a maid crossing the courtyard. The carriage had traversed its gravel last night when she had arrived. Her room was immediately over the main door of the castle. Across the courtyard, enclosed by buildings, stood the gates. They were hung from two stone pillars surmounted by lions holding shields. The gates themselves, delicate as a curtain, through which shone a vista of green meadows, were made of wrought iron, marvellously floriated, with the Edelstein arms in each panel. It was all that her imagination desired for the entrance to a castle in Fairyland. At those gates the Prince Charming would arrive. Behind them, sleeping in the upper room of her castle, was the Princess. This morning she, Pamela, was the Princess, transmuted from the typist at Truslove and Trimmer's by the magic of money.

" Pamela, my dear—it is worth it all. You'll never regret this. Take your fill of the morning. To-morrow the typewriter, but to-day the Tyrol ! "

So she said to herself, aloud. Someone emerging from the door beneath made her draw in, for princesses didn't lean out of castle windows when they were clad only in their pyjamas—not nice princesses, only those that took to writing novels and shaking cocktails. But curiosity made Pamela desire to see who it was walking across the courtyard. Perhaps it would be the count. He must emerge sometime. To-day, surely, she'd see him. It would mean disillusionment of course. Counts looking countish, according to film and fiction, were flawlessly dressed, suave and immoral. If Count Hugo was like that she would detest him. If he wasn't, then he wouldn't seem like a count. It would be difficult for him to be satisfactory in either case. And if he were just a nice affable young man, inclined to be flippant or flirtatious, as Miss Bennett had suggested, then he

wouldn't fit the picture at all. A man with ancestors like his shouldn't be flippant, and with a wife like the countess he had no right to flirt.

The man below was now half-way across the court-yard. He was dressed in tweeds—plus-fours, that favourite costume of men with toothpick legs who look like famished Miltons. These legs were quite good, however, but they were not the count's. They belonged to the rather affable gentleman of last night, called Mr. Crawley. He had the gravest manner for a young man she had ever encountered.

Two dogs, Siberian wolf-hounds, bounded out to greet him. He talked to them in German. The maid emerging again, he said something to her and was answered with smiles. Evidently he was at home, with human beings and animals alike. He passed out through the side gate, accompanied by the fussy dogs.

Miss Bennett had said they all breakfasted in their own rooms. Pamela put on a dressing-wrap and rang. In a few minutes someone tapped and entered. It was the maid she had seen the previous evening.

Again the pantomime. Words answered by words —all purposeless. Pointing, gesticulating. No, hot water, evolved Pamela from fingers directed to the washstand. The girl pointed at her mouth, and then displayed both hands on her stomach, munching.

"*Ja!*" cried Pamela, in the assurance of her one word.

"*Bitte!*" responded the maid, all smiles, equally delighted with their ludicrous performance. The door closed.

Yes. It was all very well. You could point and you could get things, tangible things, after a process of rejection. But people's minds were shut off from you. Two highly intelligent human beings, anxious to know each other, were worse than mutes, locked

away from each other by this preposterous language-difficulty. Yet a baby of four could talk with its parents. It was a humiliating thing for the human race. Somehow it made one inferior to birds and animals.

The maid returned, bearing a tray which she deposited on a small table. Then she brought in shoes and a can of hot water.

Pamela attempted again.

"What is your name?" she asked.

Smiles, amusement, a body all wriggles and, again, "*Bitte?*"

"Name—how are you called? Kate, Jane, Lucy, Mary—name?"

Oh, it was baffling, ludicrous. They could only smile at each other and they wanted to be so friendly.

Pamela had a swift inspiration. She ran across to her portmanteau and took hold of the label, beckoning.

"*Ach!*" exclaimed the girl, delighted. "*Von* London!"

Pamela shook her head. But she wouldn't give up.

"No—look—name, my name, my Christian name," she repeated.

"*Ja! Engländerin!*" said the girl, her smile still more affable.

In despair Pamela had to laugh, but at that moment something stirred in the girl's mind.

"*Ach! Ja! Namen?* Greta!" said the girl, pointing to herself.

They both grinned at each other in triumph. Their friendship was sealed. Greta retired, smiling from head to foot.

Pamela surveyed the tray. So this was a continental breakfast. There was one small white jug of coffee, one of milk, a little dish of honey, two rolls, and four square pieces of beet sugar. Pamela carried

the tray to the table by the window. She wouldn't miss one moment of this morning glory on mountain and valley.

But there were voices in the next room, loud voices which broke the peace of the scene. They came from the room where the Genius, the authoress, lived, and ate. A quarrel? It sounded very much like one. There was a woman's voice, high pitched, querulous, and a man's, low, patient. No, there were two men. What was it all about?

Pamela listened. She had a right to listen in her own room; besides, life was too wonderful to miss in any form just now.

"It is monstrous! Monstrous! Never have I been treated like this," proclaimed a voice. "My work suffers. How can I concentrate with that terrific noise! It begins at daybreak, it lasts till sunset. Not a word can I write, not a word worthy of me. Have your people no respect for art, or are we to be persecuted here, as everywhere, by the Philistines?"

"I cannot stop a sawmill working, madam," said a patient voice.

"You must tell them who I am—that I cannot work for the noise—that my book is being ruined—ruined! It is insupportable! I'm becoming a nervous wreck."

"Madame has not slept all nighta. Oh, how she suffers! It ees indeed monstrous. And her art. Ah! that ees terrible to think of it, for it to be broken by much noise. Madame must be tranquil—so the great work ees finished she does. I wanta for her the tranquillity."

A soft voice this—was it a man's?

"I am sorry, madame. The mill has always been there. It was working when you came. I have no power to stop it," said the quiet voice.

"It has never screamed like this before. I cannot compose. And the water! Always the noise of water—where does it all come from? And bells—why do they ring their bells like that, morning and noon and evening? It's insane. How can I write?"

The voice mounted to a note of angry complaint.

"I cannot change the habits of the country, madame," said the quiet voice. "I can only suggest one thing—that you leave."

"Leave!" protested the woman's voice. "In the middle of my work! Have you no respect for my name, my achievement? My book must be finished. It is announced in two hemispheres. I came here to find peace, inspiration. I thought the creator of lovely things was honoured in this land. And what do I find—bells, rivers, sawmills, impertinence from maids, badly cooked food, water that isn't——"

"Really, madame, you need say no more," interrupted the man's voice. "You are free to go—as I am free to ask you to go."

There was a shrill cry of indignation, a jumble of the woman's voice and of the soft voice of the man. It was a strange duet of protests. Genius had been outraged. Pamela listened breathless. That quiet voice must be the count's.

"Go! You ask me to go! Indeed, I will not! How can I go, when I am settled, when I am in the middle of my theme?" demanded the voice of outrage.

"You said you could not work, madame. However that is, I cannot permit my household to be upset by you any longer."

"René—ask the count to leave the room. I feel ill. Never have I known such rudeness. René, darling—ask him to go. I shall faint. I haven't slept all night! The noise, and now his impertinence!"

"You have distressed Madame Baker. Please to go," said the suave voice.

"Certainly," replied the other. "But I must insist that Madame Baker takes the first opportunity to leave this house. We cannot accommodate her."

"René, dear—I will not speak to this hotel-keeper. Not a word again. René, darling—I shall faint if he does not go. My salts, René—there—oh, it is insufferable! My head! The noise! The terrible noise!"

A door opened and closed. Pamela listened breathlessly against her door. What an awful thing for the young count! There were footsteps going down the landing. They were his. What a thing to happen in his own castle! Poor young man.

A sharp tap on her own door made Pamela start back, as if she had been discovered eavesdropping. It was repeated. Pamela folded her wrap around her.

"Come in!" she said, a little afraid.

The door opened and a white-faced young woman stood on the threshold.

"Please, could you lend Madame Baker a little *sal volatile*—she feels faint, and thought perhaps you might have some, if you would be so kind!"

Pamela opened her dressing-case. She happened to have a bottle. It puzzled her to think how Madame Baker knew she was in the next room. She badly wanted to look on Genius. This was her opportunity.

"Can I help you—won't you take me to your mistress?" she asked.

The ruse worked. The maid smiled and led the way. When the door of Madame Baker's room opened, Pamela halted, a little amazed at her own audacity, and still more amazed at what she saw.

The room was a large one, with two double windows opening on to a balcony commanding a magnificent view of the valley and the town. Pamela had never

seen a bedroom like this before. It was a kind of State apartment: the bed was not so much a bed as a throne. It rested, first, on a dais. It was very broad and covered with a crimson damask counterpane, embroidered with the Edelstein arms. Over the bed hung a canopy from which fell damask curtains of the same hue as the counterpane. The canopy was surmounted by a large gilt coronet, supported by twin cherubs, also of carved gilt. The large space at the back of the bed was entirely covered by a tapestry —a Gothic *mille-fleure* hunting scene of cavaliers, ladies and dogs. In the middle of the tapestry hung a golden frame containing a small painting of a Madonna and Child. The face of the Madonna was pale, exquisite and smiling. Pamela learnt afterwards it was ascribed to Bellini, and a family heirloom.

Of immediate human interest, and almost regal importance, was Madame Baker. She did not lie in bed, she sat enthroned. Two large lace pillows at her back, their whiteness in strong contrast with a mass of Titian-red hair. She shone like the risen sun, her face still flushed with anger and wholly contradictory to a woman about to faint. Her white jewelled hands lay on the crimson damask, but one hand only was free. The other——

Pamela might well be forgiven for her somewhat unmannerly stare on her entrance. The bed, the woman in the bed, the almost regal ensemble, was completed by the courtier, the Lord of the Bedchamber. Magnificent in a figured silk dressing-gown, he sat on the side of the bed, solicitous, handsome as Rizzio attendant upon Queen Mary of Scots, a brown manicured hand smoothing the white one beneath his. He was the young Italian Pamela had seen in the drawing-room last evening, mistaking him for Count Hugo. His black hair, *en brosse*, had the virile luxuri-

ance of the elegant young Italians, his skin, olive and smooth, the rotund softness of a child's. He was handsome with his dark eyes and arched eyebrows, in the manner of the Latins, early matured and of fleeting if puissant youth. As he leaned over the woman reclining on the pillows, his pyjama jacket gaped, revealing strong throat and bronzed chest. For some reason he appeared to Pamela more as a leopard than a man, cat-like, with the cryptic, muscular strength of an animal.

They both returned Pamela's stare, and then Madame Baker, withdrawing her hand, forced a smile to her face and spoke.

"You are in the next room? Thank you so much, I sent my maid in desperation. I feel so faint," she said, taking the *sal volatile* bottle from the maid. "Will you not come in? I am Madame Baker. This is my secretary, Signor Cavello. I have had no sleep for noise. Always there is noise. It pursues me across the earth. I was driven from my palazzo in Venice. You would think that would be silent, with canals and gondolas, and no streets for motor-cars. But it is terrible. There are motor launches and bells, bells at sunrise and sunset, bells for Mass, bells for each hour, bells for noonday—and when the bells cease there are aeroplanes from the lagoons, droning over a people that have no eardrums. So I came here, for quiet, to do my work, and there is noise, noise of water, noise of bells—and a sawmill, a sawmill of all things!"

She threw out her hands in semi-hysteria, and appealed to Pamela.

"There's a conspiracy to prevent me writing. All my life events have conspired against me. But it is always so. Genius is a capacity for receiving pain. I suffer. Perhaps I must suffer that my work shall

be fuller. But I can bear no more. And now this scene, this insolence from a bad hotel-keeper!"

She waved her hands, lay back on the pillows, closed her eyes and moaned softly. She looked like a dying queen. It stirred the young man to pity. His brown, lean hand smoothed her brow, travelled over the Titian-red hair.

"*Carissima*—you shall not be vexed. You shall not be troubled. Ah, you suffer for ze world to rejoice. Yes, zat ees always genius. Our Dante, Tasso, Goethe, Byron—they suffered. It ees ze price of your great work, *carissima*. Ees it not so, madame? You will zay as I zay that it ees so?"

He turned his limpid dog's eyes on Pamela, seeking corroboration, but she was too fascinated by the whole scene to make any comment. The maid stood like a statue at the head of the bed. Madame Baker sighed, stirred. Her hand sought Signor Cavello's. He raised it to his lips and she smiled over his bent, raven head.

"We are indomitable, Miss——" she paused, looking slowly at Pamela.

"My name's Pamela Kemp."

"Indomitable, Miss Kemp. How otherwise should we achieve our ends? The blind Milton, the sick Keats, the persecuted Shelley. We suffer, having too much soul. The artistic temperament is a terrible gift. The world will never understand us, will it, René?"

"Never, *carissima*. Our own Duse, she suffered too."

"Ah, what genius! I know all she suffered!" sighed Madame Baker, contentedly. "Each time a book is born it is as a baby—the birth-throes are mine. It is flesh and blood."

She closed her eyes again. Pamela had no idea

authorship was so devastating. Humbug? Pamela crushed the horrid suspicion. This was an authoress. Genius must be allowed its strangeness. She must read Madame Baker's work. She was ashamed to think she had not heard of her, but, then, she was not well read. It would be awful if Madame Baker asked her something about her books.

"Miss Kemp, you must forgive me for appearing so distraught. I have just had a most unpleasant scene. Such as we can never allow again!" said Madame Baker.

"Never!" echoed Signor Cavello, fervently looking into her eyes as if she might slip from a life so wearisome. The "we" somehow fitted the bed and the setting. The whole thing was regal. Pamela crushed a suspicion that it was ludicrous.

"When I am better, we will talk, Miss Kemp. *Vita brevis, ars longa.* How true it is! Life is not long enough for art. And my days are wasted with noise, with vulgar disputes with inn-keepers. Why am I not protected from all this?"

"You shall be protected, *carissima.* I am here to shut you off from ze world," avowed Signor Cavello, again kissing the back of the jewelled hand in his. This time she released her hand and stroked his black hair, smiling into his watchful eyes.

"René, *caro,* I know, I know," she sighed.

For a moment in utter peace she closed her eyes and sighed. Then, opening them, and conscious of Pamela, entranced by this curious scene—

"Thank you so much, my dear. We shall meet again. We shall talk of things that matter, that endure."

Inclining her head, she dismissed Pamela, who left the room.

The door closed behind her. For a long moment

Pamela stood in utter stupefaction. Had she been hypnotised by the scene?

"Why, that woman's mad!" she said, as soon as she was back in her own room.

X CATS

Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett had found seats in the garden. By habit they had registered an inalienable claim to the two wicker chairs that fitted them so well. There are chairs whose bottoms are too low, or backs too straight; chairs that have no arms, and, worse, chairs that would be better without such arms as they have. By careful selection and rejection after one month's sojourn the two ladies had found the chairs that fitted them. They had made it known they were to be regarded as their chairs. More important than this, they had appropriated a view and a place. They were connoisseurs in these things, the minor accomplishments which provide the major comforts of life. You could not shepherd Lady Prudence or Miss Bennett into a bedroom with a south view in summer or a north view in winter, or a room, even in correct orientation, without running water and a reading-lamp at the bedside. Even then there were tests to be made. The bed, of course, must be flawless. Not one of those too soft beds, rutted in the centre by German, English and American bodies successively imposed upon their mattresses, nor one of those convex, as opposed to the concave, beds, whose too assiduous springs inhospitably rolled one off them. The latter, Miss Bennett somewhat acidly called 'the rock-bottom test.'

The beds passed, these admirable ladies, firm with

the landlords and ruthless with the polyglot concierges of the world's cities, proceeded to other investigations. If in a large city, they must have inside rooms so that no motor-cars, tramways, concrete-drilling, road-making paraphernalia could render the night and morning hideous, or, failing these, the nocturnal pedestrianism of continental races, allied with those plangent voices, doubtless conducive to success in Grand Opera, but fatal to the heaviest slumber.

And all the little snares they knew. Such as service bells that rang on the outside of the bedroom wall, thus giving to the hapless occupant a succession of vibrations every time another number rang for coffee or hot water. Oh, yes, Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett knew their way about the world, which really meant their way about the world's hotels. In a neat little book each kept a record. It was a black bound book containing, from A to Z (the former being the city of Aachen and the latter the city of Zyzergana, for they had travelled the alphabet), a list of hotels recommended, hotels tried, hotels commended and hotels damned.

Armed with this book, each was a most welcome member of that cosmopolitan club of vestibule gossips whose chief topic, next to the cheapest shops, is the best hotels—that is, the hotels where the most is obtained for the least outlay, with a good position, social and geographical, included.

Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett had awarded the order of merit to Schloss Edelstein. It was cheap, the beds were conveniently concave, the reading lamps accessible, the food—beyond praise, lest the price should be increased. The maids were cheerful, their hosts attractive and, moreover, 'one of us.' The smaller amenities, such as these two chairs in this position, were excellent.

Miss Bennett was still embroidering. She was one of those women whose hands had a permanent St. Vitus dance. They must be eternally dancing over something. Lady Prudence's hands, to use a phrase of the domestic novelist, were always folded in her lap. They were beautiful hands, and so never quite folded, being conscious of themselves even while recumbent.

"I like this spot," said Miss Bennett, stabbing her canvas frame.

"It is delightful," agreed Lady Prudence.

No one could have disagreed. Milton could not have set Adam and Eve in a more seductive place. They sat on one corner of a stone-flagged terrace. Behind was the schloss, its south side facing the valley. At one end of the terrace there was a small grove of pines, standing like an army, grey, silent, the sunlight striking downwards in shafts, like falling spears, on staunch foemen. In the open valley lay Kitzburg, with its three church steeples. One was merely a bell-tower, the others were attached to the churches. One of the steeples suggested a foreign origin, with its cupola that might have come straight from Moscow. But this Byzantine effect was often encountered in these Alpine villages.

Kitzburg straggled through the valley. It lay along the banks of a thin stream, glacier-grey, obscuring it with overbuilt houses, sometimes lifting it up on primitive viaducts of boards, cut direct from the pine trees, as were all the field fences. The town, red and grey roofed, with cream and white walls, seen from the schloss, was like a toy, taken out of an ark and set in the sunshine. Around it abruptly rose the mountains, with the lower slopes tilled and fenced. The higher pastures, of emerald green, were dotted with wooden chalets; then came the belts of pine forest,

and higher, arid rose-red rock protruding like ribs through the green vesture. And over all, serene, dazzling in sunlight, mysterious in moonlight, the snowfields that beckoned the intrepid climber.

Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett never climbed. They were content to view those heights without experiencing the imperative call felt by many. They were not even excited by the prospect of ascending the Kitzberg by aerial railway. It would be interesting, of course, and comfortable, they hoped.

"I think Count Hugo is making a mistake in undertaking such a costly thing," observed Lady Prudence. "I don't see how it can be made to pay."

"Mr. Crawley thinks it will—there are the ski-ers in winter. Sportsmen will pay for anything that enables them to risk their necks," said Miss Bennett, looking up. A bird singing in the Judas tree demanded attention. The warm May sunshine was drawing out all the scents of the garden. Well might a bird sing. With it was joined a human voice, a man's. He was somewhere down in the meadow. Footsteps sounded on the terrace, at the far end. A young woman passed, descending the steps towards the tennis courts.

"That's that Miss Kemp, who arrived last night," said Lady Prudence, when she had passed out of sight. "I thought she was perhaps one of the Keedon-Kemps. I know by the way she told me, she's not. Why do people tell such lies!"

"They're sometimes provoked into them," observed Miss Bennett, dryly.

Lady Prudence looked at her, not sure how the remark was to be taken. She was never quite sure when Janet Bennett was rude or just stupid.

"I put liars in two categories. Utilitarians and

romanticists. The first are dangerous, the others entertaining," said Miss Bennett.

"A liar is a liar," replied Lady Prudence, firmly. "There is but one truth. That young woman hasn't even the courage of her lie. She told me she was a Keedon-Kemp. Then she backed out by saying she was only distantly related. I was not deceived."

"But you were to blame, Prudence."

Miss Bennett was in one of those pugnacious moods this morning, which quite spoilt the view. Lady Prudence merely said, "Indeed!"

"Yes, the poor young woman realised you were trying to place her—and it frightened her. I think she's just come out of prison."

"Prison!" exclaimed Lady Prudence, wide-eyed, alert at once. "How did you find that out?"

"One of those industrial prisons—nine to five, with an hour for lunch, where you and I would be if we hadn't a monthly allowance, my dear."

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Lady Prudence. "We all have our duties. I've no doubt she is quite happy."

"A comfortable philosophy for us," answered Miss Bennett, for a moment suspending her work as she watched Pamela go down the steps and pause on the edge of the tennis courts. "Personally, I've never allowed my duties to interfere with pleasure—I know I was born with a golden spoon in my mouth, and I don't deny I've sucked it well."

Lady Prudence shifted uneasily in her chair. These were the moments when Miss Bennett's preposterous Socialism was so trying to an old friendship. As the niece of an ex-Lord Chancellor it was too flippant a way of taking life. She had always placed duties first. When she promised to open a Sale of Work she kept her promise, even if it involved coming from Scotland or the Continent. But Miss Bennett laughed at Sales

of Work. She was a little lacking in a sense of social service.

"I like that girl—she's spirit," said Miss Bennett, still regarding Pamela. "And she's most attractive. Something's happened to her lately. I feel it."

"She may be an adventuress, we know nothing about her," answered Lady Prudence, guardedly. "I feel this place is full of adventurers."

"Good heavens—I don't think it's nearly so interesting as that. To whom do you allude in particular?"

"That Mrs. Baker—or 'Madame' as she calls herself. We don't even know she's married. And I've never heard of her books. Judging by her conduct with that young Italian, they must be poisonous."

Miss Bennett loved a duel, and here was a splendid one. She lay aside her embroidery frame.

"You're quite wrong, my dear. I've met a lot of authors, and I've come to the opinion that the outrageous books are always written by the most charming and proper persons, while really dull books, in all senses of the word, are often written by the most preposterous persons. Personally, from all we can learn of Madame Baker's mode of life, I should expect to find her books terribly dull and very proper. It's quite possible she writes children's books."

"Now you are teasing me," laughed Lady Prudence, and Miss Bennett was delighted with this effect, for when Lady Prudence lost her stiffness, in moments like these, she looked more human and twenty years younger. And Miss Bennett for forty years had held the opinion that a finer woman than her friend had not walked the earth. But she would make herself a stick and live in the age of the antimacassar.

"My dear, you have to do one thing at once," said Miss Bennett.

"What's that?"

"Forgive that nice girl for telling you a whopping lie. You deserved it!"

"There is nothing to forgive. She injured herself."

"Well, don't hold it up against her. That poor girl's suffered. I can see it in her eyes. A rotten young man probably," affirmed Miss Bennett, picking up the frame again. "She looks pinched—that's what it is—pinched in pocket and pinched in the stomach. She wants a respite from battle—and you're too well armed."

Lady Prudence laughed again. Her friend in this mood was irresistible.

"You'll make me believe I'm really a terrible old woman," she said. "Very well, the battle which was never declared, is called off. Are you satisfied?"

Miss Bennett said nothing, but put one hand over the other woman's and pressed it. There were footsteps approaching.

"Here's Mrs. Waring. She comes and looks at this chair every morning. I refuse to give it up. She got into it once, and now she looks at me as if I were a usurper. Young women like her can sit on hard chairs, it's good for them. I was never allowed to lean back until I was twenty."

Mrs. Waring approached, looked at the view and then at the two ladies.

"What a beautiful morning!" she said, with almost a sigh.

"Beautiful—we're enjoying the sunshine, it's quite warm here," replied Miss Bennett, the needle busy again. Mrs. Waring was a terrible bore and not to be encouraged.

"Yes—this is the best place, I think—but the chairs are so hard," complained Mrs. Waring, looking at the three remaining wooden chairs.

"They are very hard," answered Lady Prudence. "I never attempt to sit in those!"

"I think I'll go along to the summer-house," said Mrs. Waring, slowly. She smiled and went. Her footsteps died away. There was absolute silence.

"My dear," said Miss Bennett, carefully drawing the silk thread through her canvas, "it is for moments like these I award you the bell."

"The bell—what bell?" asked Lady Prudence, innocently.

"The bell that hangs round the neck of a perfect cat!"

XI KITZBURG

I

If Pamela at this moment of her life had been offered whatever she desired, she would have chosen to remain as she was, exactly where she was. To us all in our lives comes once, if we recognise it, a moment of absolute felicity. It was such a moment now for Pamela. She stood on the bottom step after her descent from the terrace, and surveyed the scene before her. A couple of cypress trees, cleverly disposed to set the picture in a dark frame, guarded the flight of stone steps. Below, on the level lawn, beyond which was a tennis court, a garden filled the space between a gravel walk and the castle's ramparts. The schloss commanded the entrance of this end of the valley. In olden days its lord had been master of Kitzburg.

Within the garden itself Spring had brought with a lavish hand the flowers for which the Tyrol is famous. Never had Pamela beheld such variety, such hues.

The garden was aflame from end to end, and, as if to give the eye cool refuge, beyond it, over the lichen-covered ramparts, rose the green pastoral slopes of the mountains in a patchwork of fields where long generations had subdued the wilderness to their ends.

Pamela listened. Nothing save the everlasting voice of the waters running unseen from their cold heights and wooded ravines. Yes, the poster was true, as far as posters could convey such beauty as she had never believed possible. She breathed deeply, as if the special virtue of the air might fill her and unite her with the supreme beauty she now beheld. Standing so, lips slightly apart, eyes bright with happiness, she was caught unaware by the young man who came noiselessly over the grass and was upon her as he turned by the cypress.

For a moment he looked, started, and then controlled himself.

" Oh, good morning. Isn't it hot ? " he exclaimed, without the slightest embarrassment. " You must be Miss Kemp ? I'm Hugo Edelstein."

He looked at her keenly now, noting mostly her eyes and the light and wonder that were in them. Then, in a moment she had changed. His words had broken a spell.

" Good morning. Yes, I am Miss Kemp. I arrived last night. What a wonderful view you have ! "

She was so free from nervousness that it surprised him a little, for there was a certain innocence in her expression that was not in keeping with such easy assurance. A few more sentences told him that she had character, and he forgot her personal appearance. An hour afterwards, asked how she was dressed, he could not remember.

" This garden is a disgrace really," he said apologetically. " My father had eight gardeners, now we

have one, so it has suffered. Have you seen the pool and the stable courtyard ? "

She had not, so he offered to show her, first putting down a broken lawn-mower he was carrying. As he stooped she was suddenly physically conscious of him. Miss Bennett was right. Men like these were dangerous. She felt his appeal in that moment and was annoyed with herself. He was wearing the Tyrolean dress that made or unmade a man, a tight-fitting deer-skin jacket, cut away over the hips like a boy's Eton suit. His white shirt had an open collar, emphasising a strong brown throat and chest. Over the front of his shirt ran an embroidered band connecting the leather braces revealed by his unbuttoned jacket. His shorts, of the same coloured skin, were slit at each side and laced, the points of the laces dangling. This device set off his brown muscular legs. Around the calves he wore white green-topped stockings, with a heavy cable stitch. But, unlike all other stockings, they stopped short above the ankles, leaving them bare down to the heavy brogue shoes. A man's dress and a man in it. She noticed as he stooped, broad-backed and slender-loined, how the sun had bleached to a straw colour the surface of his thick light-brown hair.

He led the way through the small pine forest at the side of the schloss, to a low red-roofed building with two storeys. They passed through an iron grille and entered a large courtyard around which ran the building.

" These were the stables. They held thirty horses. Their names are still over the doors, you see. We've two now, and I keep the car in the end stable. Above is the harness-room—with our lighting plant ! "

There was a small square tower with a clock, and below, on a stone scroll, the Edelstein arms. Grass

grew between the cobbles, the windows were covered with dust and cobwebs.

"We've no use for all this now—so we just let it go," he said, a little apologetically, conscious of its air of decay.

"Doesn't it make you sad—the change that's overtaken everything?" asked Pamela. Perhaps, she reflected, it was a tactless remark.

"Oh, no—we've no time to think about what's gone. It's gone, and for ever. I've no illusions, and I refuse to be made miserable by what might-have-been. Running this place as an hotel is great fun, really."

How could he say that, fresh from the scene with the Genius? A light-hearted person, not serious enough for the stern business of life. So Pamela merely said,

"How well you speak English—were you ever in England?"

"No—but we learnt languages when we were children—and the Crawleys were often here. We were like one family."

"The Crawleys—Mr. Crawley who is here now?"

"Yes—he was Karl's great friend. They were inseparable, and Ian's sister, too."

"Karl was your brother—he was killed?" asked Pamela.

"Yes—this is the way to the pond," he answered, anxious to change the subject. They passed through a door in the right wall and entered another garden, planned in Italian style, with a pergola. In the centre was a round pool, marble-rimmed.

"We bathe here in the summer, when we feel too lazy to go down to the Amsee."

"Where's that?"

"Oh, of course you haven't seen Kitzburg yet.

That's our lake, where all the town bathes. It's a hot spring, so the water's always warm. You must go down there. The visitors are beginning to arrive now. Unfortunately it may be bought by our local villain," he explained, laughing. A wolfhound ran up to him, fussily, and sniffed at Pamela's skirt. He patted it and spoke to it in German.

" The local villain ? " repeated Pamela, in wonder.

He laughed and looked at her. Up till this moment he had not examined her, treating her with a polite indifference. At a first glance she had seemed unattractive, characteristic of those English girls whose qualities were never obvious. A French or an American girl produced an immediate impression with her *chic* or easy freedom. This girl, like most of the English, had no immediate glamour. But as he looked at her now, pleased first by the soft quality of her voice, and also by the common sense that was in her, he found something that gave him deeper pleasure than her poise.

If not beautiful, there was about her a singular quality. The eyes, clear, blue, had absolute fearlessness. In them was that frank penetration of the child's look which exhibits, as in a mirror, the impression it receives. She looked at you sharply, with an air that made you feel your remarks would not be accepted without testing.

The nose, too, had an inquisitiveness that was delightful. The nostrils curved upwards, sensitive as an animal's, and when she smiled, they too smiled. A full rosy mouth completed a suggestion of naughtiness, nymph-like, most oddly contradicted by those solemn eyes and the thoughtful brow above them. There was something in the soft folds of her light brown hair, so justly the complement of a rosy complexion, that made her head appear aureoled, for the light shone not so much upon it, as through it.

He saw all this now, and yet remained baffled, for her attraction was one of character as much as of feature. And until her character was clearer he felt he would not rightly realise her deeper qualities.

All this passed through his mind as she asked her question. "The local villain?" half amused, half serious, with such a lively interest in her eyes that he warmed towards her at once. She was a friendly creature, he felt.

"Oh, that's a long story," he laughed, as they walked along the parterres, so sadly fallen from their former luxuriance, but still lovely to Pamela. All around them rose the mountains, cloud shadowed, with uplands laughing in the sunlight, a changing panorama of light and shade. "Baron Kneller's the evil genius of Kitzburg. He's a war product, who turned up here when Austria was in the melting-pot. He belongs to a small undistinguished family from Budapest, and married a daughter of Prince Leopold of Zagreb——"

"Prince Leopold—oh, how extraordinary! I know him!" exclaimed Pamela.

"A nice fellow, I believe. Well——"

"Oh, I don't know him personally," said Pamela, at once. She was not going to repeat the Keedon-Kemp error. "We only travelled on the same train."

"Well—marriage was Kneller's only claim to respectability, and he didn't keep that long. He was divorced in nine months and then married a Russian ballerina. He broke her neck in a climbing accident, perhaps he'd have broken her heart, failing that. He ate his way into Kitzburg as a representative of the Socialists, during their regime here, after Bela Kun's orgies in Budapest. He brought money with him and began buying when we were all at starvation level. Now he owns half of Kitzburg, and you can't

live anywhere, go anywhere, buy anything, without doing business with Baron Kneller. He owns two hotels here, the garage, a bathing establishment, a cinema, the skating-pool, the chief toboggan run, and four of the alpine restaurants. Schloss Edelstein is the last stronghold to stand against his monopoly. We've declared war to the knife ! "

" You appear to enjoy it ! " said Pamela, seeing the animation in his face. " Are you winning ? "

He didn't answer her at once, but stretched a brown hand out towards the snow-covered colossus across the valley.

" Do you see that ? "

" The mountain—that's the Kitzberg, isn't it ? "

" Yes—but I mean something else," he answered. " Can you see it—those cables going up ? "

" Yes—it's a railway ? "

" Well, that's my idea ! "

There was triumph in his voice. She could see his whole existence was bound by those thin shining cables, climbing across their spidery standards up the precipitous face of the mountain.

" You can't think how that infuriates Kneller. It's the one thing he can't control. He's tried to buy his way in, but we won't have him. He bribed the workmen to strike, and we broke that. Then he put panic into the chalet holders on the lower ridge—said the cables would break and their homes would be smashed in by the falling car. That caused us a lot of trouble—our peasants are panicky about anything that threatens their property. We gave them small shares in the concern to appease them. Now Kneller's threatening competition—he says he'll run a railway up the Königsberg—that other fellow there."

Pamela looked at the Königsberg—higher and more inaccessible than the Kitzberg.

"Can he do that?" she asked.

"No! Of course he can't. I've told Ian that. It would cost too much, even if it could be done, which I doubt. Besides, there isn't room for two mountain railways."

"You are very ambitious," said Pamela, studying his eager face as he pushed the falling hair back from his brow. She saw by his veinless hands, his unlined face and the open expression of his face that he was young, much younger perhaps than men of his own age would seem in London. He hid nothing of his emotions. His temper was probably that of a badly brought-up child. Pamela began to wonder what kind of a husband he made. He had the air of a child accustomed to satisfy every whim.

"You think me ambitious? Yes—I am—terrifically! No—that's not the right word, is it?—tremendously! That station up there, right on the crest, isn't a station for me."

"What is it?" asked Pamela, slightly amused at his intensity.

"It's a star. My star in the ascendant!"

He almost breathed the last words, with the reverence of a prayer. Pamela's half-smile vanished. Perhaps he noticed her amusement at his earnestness.

"You mustn't laugh at me—please!"

"I'm not laughing at you, Count Hugo," answered Pamela, quietly.

They were standing by the garden parapet now. He leaned over it, and she noticed his hands. They affected her curiously. Male hands with such a life of their own in those strong, smooth fingers.

"Miss Kemp—I like you!" he said suddenly, after a pause in which they viewed the trim fields, the barns and the brown balconied chalets, their wooden tiles held down by cross-bars and stones.

Pamela looked steadily towards the town. What reply did one make to an abrupt remark of that kind? One couldn't say 'thank you.'

"Yes, I like you terrifically," he said, unabashed.

"Tremendously."

"Sorry—tremendously. My English is awful!"

"On the contrary—it's very fluent," answered Pamela.

He missed her point, for he said, "Thank you," quite solemnly, and continued—

"I like you because I feel I can talk to you. Englishwomen are like that. They have no emotions when they hear things."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Pamela, more and more astonished by this young man. "I'm sorry to learn that. It depends on what they hear."

"Ah—I am stupid in expressing myself. I mean, you, for instance, don't say 'Yes—I think so too. It's wonderful. You're quite right!' You say very little, and I've got to justify myself—my cable railway—my ambitions. Well, you shall see, in July when the railway opens."

"I'm sorry, but I shan't be here then," said Pamela. "I have to be back in London."

He laughed and sat down on the parapet. Did he expect her to sit down too? Pamela stood. This young man would have to be snubbed. He knew how attractive he was sitting thus—one leg swinging, white teeth and laughing eyes.

"Does the countess share your ambitions?" she asked, abruptly.

But her arrow didn't pierce him.

"No. Anna's my perfect counterpart. Her feet are on the earth, while I soar. She's determined Fate shan't disappoint her."

Well, it was nice of him to admit that much about his wife. A perfect counterpart.

" But you can't live for ever with people fastened to the earth, can you ? "

He shattered himself with that remark. He might think it, but he had no right to utter it.

" Thank you for showing me the stables—and this garden's a jewel. I must go now," said Pamela.

He rose to accompany her. Near the terrace again she was compelled to snub him still more severely.

" Won't you let me show you the town—if you've nothing to do ? It's a picturesque old place. I have to go down there this morning," he said.

" Thank you. I'm afraid I've things I must do, Count Hugo," she replied.

At the end of the terrace he left her, with a low, sedate bow.

Phew ! said the cypresses, rustling softly in an eddy of wind. H'm ! sang a wild bee, hovering around Pamela. " Well, I never ! " said Pamela to herself, which, although an idiom of speech that might have conveyed little to Count Hugo, expressed much that stirred in Pamela's mind.

II

Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett saw the count bow as he left his companion.

" That young man's been making himself agreeable," said Miss Bennett. " In all my fifty-four years of futile flirtation I've never encountered anyone who could make himself so agreeable as the count."

Pamela knew she had been seen, but it would have been cowardly not to say good morning to the two ladies. And she was determined not to be frightened by them. Lady Prudence, in particular, had to be

tackled. Like all women with a stiff front, she probably had a soft spine.

"Good morning, Miss Kemp," said Miss Bennett, as she drew near. "Won't you join us?"

Lady Prudence bowed. Her smile was that of a queen at the end of a long day of determined affability. Pamela accepted the invitation.

"So Count Hugo's been showing you the garden?" asked Miss Bennett, continuing her work. Then, with a quizzical expression and her needle suspended in the air—"Which did you find the more delightful?"

Pamela looked at her questioner, a little puzzled.

"Now, confess, my dear, you do find him attractive, I'm sure. Lady Prudence has been suffering from a repressed passion for two months," laughed the little lady.

"Janet—how can you say such things!" cried Lady Prudence. "I'm sure Miss Kemp has already learned not to take you seriously!"

"Of course she has! If she's half as sensible as I surmise, she'll take nothing seriously that I say. Miss Kemp has already decided I'm an impossible old woman."

"This is very embarrassing for me," laughed Pamela. "As for Count Hugo, I scarcely know him yet."

"Clever Miss Kemp—reserve judgment! You'll keep us all tremendously excited. Now, we are going down into the town. Won't you come with us?"

"I should love to—if it's not troubling you?" answered Pamela.

"It won't. I never let myself be troubled," said Miss Bennett energetically winding up her silk thread. "I've to call at the shoemaker's, and Lady Prudence wants some glasses repaired. After that we can show you the town."

Ten minutes later, three ladies on the white high-road leading to the town were passed by a young gentleman, also going in the same direction, on a cycle. It was Count Hugo. Pamela was not sorry he saw her. It would do him good to experience a set-back. He had the abashless air of a gentleman too accustomed to easy conquests.

But the count, cycling along, was by no means dismayed. Had she known it, Pamela's inaccessibility only whetted his appetite. That was the kind of woman he liked. The chase was everything. His call at the bank finished, he would go and sit in the Café Bauer—a Kneller concern so be it—but one to which Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence always went for their morning cup of coffee. After that he would show Miss Kemp the town. For the two elderly ladies hated walking over cobbles. Happily, parts of Kitzburg were still cobbled.

Pamela spent a delightful morning. Who should be in the Café Bauer, where the coffee was more than delicious, but Count Hugo, who had come in to look at the papers. Miss Bennett seemed excessively surprised.

"Now this is most fortunate! Here's Miss Kemp dying to see the town, with two old women trying to be hospitable."

"I'll be delighted to show Miss Kemp the place," said the count, gravely.

Yes, he had won, but he allowed no light of victory to show in his face. As for Miss Bennett, she smiled as she sat back in her chair, with Lady Prudence engrossed in a four-days-old *Times*.

"You couldn't have a better guide than the count. He knows every stone—so please don't worry about us. We'll see you at lunch."

Delivered thus, Pamela surrendered. The count bowed gravely as he left the two ladies. A little flame of colour leapt to Pamela's cheeks as she saw a wink pass between him and Miss Bennett.

But she could not be churlish for long with a young man of an irrepressible disposition. He was so much in love with life, and the world itself was so much in love with this sun-smitten May morning, that Pamela forgave him. She would have been alone in her aloofness too, for he was hailed by old women and tiny children. They all knew the count, or the '*Graf*' as he was entitled, and they knew him with a friendliness of spirit that enabled shop-keepers and schoolboys to wave their hands and shout "*Guten Morgen*!" The youths of the town stuck their red hands in the pockets of leather shorts, grinned and nodded, their glance travelling swiftly from the count to his companion. Evidently one could be an aristocrat and remain a human being. They might have all been his brothers and sisters, so gaily affable was he.

The spirit of it permeated Pamela. She found herself loving them all. The women for their bright faces, their delightful sleeveless frocks, with tight-fitting print bodices, short frilled aprons and billowing skirts. They were real Gretchens come out of a Hans Andersen fairy tale. She liked the sun-raddled old men with queer velvet jackets and things like shaving brushes perched on the back of their felt hats. She liked the barefooted boys and girls, followed by long-bodied dachshunds, girls with plaits of flaxen hair and boys with hair standing up like tow over freckled, mischievous faces. She liked the slim, broad-shouldered young men, with springy legs and tanned muscular knees. One looked like the young Goethe with his open shirt and poet's eyes. Perhaps

he was the town Faust, causing that rosy Marguerite to look so confused by his banter. Yes, this was the Middle Ages through which they were now walking.

The town, which retained much of its fifteenth-century character, had originally been walled and fortified. The walls had remained, with shops and houses now penetrating their massive masonry. At the end of the High Street the road still went out under the old gateway, beyond which the valley and the pass were gained. But now the town had burst through its walls, and there was an outside growth of chalets, shops and hotels, as well as the ancient houses and churches encircled by the protecting ramparts.

The twentieth century had penetrated the citadel, but it had been chastened in spirit. All the life of the town had to flow down its High Street, which led from alpine valley to gateway, and thence onwards to the station, whose worldly intrusion was not suffered within less than half a mile. Imagination, too, had been at work where convenience had triumphed over antiquity. The houses and hostelries, with wide overhanging eaves and shuttered windows, had been refaced and painted under the direction of an artist. With a sure sense of the picturesque opportunities of this old street, he had caused a variation, harmonious withal, to be displayed in the coloured façades of these buildings. Green and brown shutters were folded back on yellow and red fronts. Carved doorways and lintels displayed the retained craftsmanship of these Tyroleans, whose skill enabled them to build wooden houses without nails, and set chalets of rustic beauty in a landscape they enhanced.

Thus, looking from the fourteenth-century church of St. Antonius, redecorated in supportable baroque, and the Gothic-towered Kirche, down the old High

Street, towards the gateway and the stern ramparts, Pamela was conscious of no incongruity. Save for the electric light suspended above that long gay street, four hundred years had drifted with spring blossom and autumn fall, as transient and as consistent. An Edelstein marshalling his men for service against the northern marauder, with halbardier and arquebus, had scarcely noticed the change save that no gateway swung iron-hinged at the imperious bugle-call, but now stood open, undefended, its arch shrilling with the hoot of an impatient car.

"To-night, just there," said Count Hugo, pointing to the raised pavement where the High Street was spaced with young trees in spring leaf, "we have *platzmusik*. You must let me bring you. The town band plays in its old costumes, and all the people are out, confetti throwing and promenading. And here's the shoemaker's. You can get a pair of hand-made shoes here for a pound sterling, that will walk you to your grave. That's what Miss Bennett says, anyhow."

A resplendent figure passed them. He glittered as he walked, in spotless uniform, sword clanking.

"Who's that?" asked Pamela awed. Since princes slept in *wagons-lits*, archdukes might walk on pavements.

"Oh, him!" laughed Count Hugo, forgetting grammar in amusement. "That's the town's one policeman. He's magnificent when two motor-cars and a haycart create a traffic problem. Are you tired or shall we see some more?"

"I'm not at all tired!" said Pamela, forgetting the wink that had sent her forth. "Show me everything."

It transpired that all the guests at Schloss Edelstein were going to hear the *platzmusik*. The countess invited Pamela to join herself, Mademoiselle Dupont, Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett. Mr. Crawley and the count, finding themselves left to their own resources after dinner, also decided to come. The evening had been made remarkable by the appearance of Madame Baker at dinner. She sat at a small table with Signor Cavello, and when coffee was served in the drawing-room she seized upon Mr. Crawley, to whom she expounded her views on baroque art. Perhaps the possibility of an evening spent with genius made him decide to go down to the town. Madame Baker never went out after dusk. The damp air was injurious to her lungs; moreover, her mind always worked better at night.

"I am unhappy if I do not express all that is in me when I work," she told Mr. Crawley. "I am nocturnal. Don't you think it is possible there is a greater inspirational force when all the earth is quiet? They say wireless is clearer at night. Our receptivity to ideas may not be unrelated, don't you think?"

Mr. Crawley despatched a desperate look at the count, which meant, "Can't you get me out of this?" It was not in vain. He received a cordial invitation to join the party now preparing to depart. Mr. Crawley excused himself.

Madame Baker displayed a jewelled hand, touching Mr. Crawley's sleeve lightly.

"Be thankful you are not at the mercy of a creative demon who gives you no rest! I am in the grip of my new book, and am a slave until it is finished," she said.

"Madame Baker worka too hard," asserted Signor Cavello. "She ees pale, thinka you not?"

" Ah, René," sighed Madame Baker, smiling at him indulgently, " you would save me from myself."

She turned to Mr. Crawley, who was sure that at that moment she believed she was being sacrificed for the enrichment of literature.

" René is the most patient of secretaries. I use him cruelly but he never murmurs."

Cavello bent his sleek head and took her hand in his, touching it with his lips. He looked at her like a dog receiving a bone. A very meaty bone, concluded Mr. Crawley, who repressed a feeling of sickness as he looked on this manicured popinjay. Then he escaped and breathed deeply in the cool night air.

The High Street was thronged when they arrived, its arc lamps forming a white light on the crowded roadway where all Kitzburg walked and talked. The band, established on the raised sidewalk in front of the post-office, was assembled before the illuminated music-stands. Girls in pinafore frocks, bare-armed and flaxen haired, youths bare-legged and tousle-headed, old women with faces like walnuts, and their husbands, barrel-bellied, with loose jowls and beer-festive faces ; young elegants, in chamois shorts with green-topped white stockings over ample calves, bare ankled in their brogue shoes ; tourists from Germany, the women fat and pudding-faced, the men prison-cropped, goggle-eyed and preposterously paunched ; hotel porters kilted in green felt aprons, and charabanc chauffeurs in breeches and leggings, so the medley ran. Nor should one omit Kitzburg's policeman, with piped trousers, shoulder straps and scabbarded sword.

But the strolling ceased, the gay chatter faltered, the band was now playing. It had a preponderance of brass over wood-wind, and a greater preponderance of the conductor over all. Let none mistake it. He

was the band. Fascinated, Pamela watched. The band was dressed in its historic costume. The players wore round felt hats, with a goose feather stuck saucily on the brim. Their blue coats, with cavalier pockets and deep-cuffed sleeves, had two rows of gilt buttons. Beneath, they wore yellow waistcoats, also gilt buttoned, with a floral embroidery in crimson thread that was continued on their plum-coloured knee-breeches. White stockings and buckled shoes completed a costume which gave them an air of Quakers in carnival garb. But the pink-cheeked severity of their blue-eyed faces left the observer in no doubt that they were the legitimate purveyors of *platzmusik*. Somewhere, far back, they had had common ancestors with the pied-piper of Hamelin.

"I adore the conductor," whispered Miss Bennett, during a rheumatic rendering of the *William Tell* Overture. "Lady Prudence and I almost come to blows over his beard. I believe she carries a clipping in her locket."

He was indeed a museum piece. Just now Pamela observed him in a moment of unusual severity. This lusty orchestra must be held down, without bursting. No captain taking a liner out of port, no general moving an army into battle, had a sterner task. Under his hand lay triumph or disaster. The sweat stood out on his brow, veins enlarged, mouth open. For a moment one glimpsed Brahms, another, Beethoven. Temporary greatness touched the earnest spirit of the village shoemaker—be it confessed—as he drew out the oboe and smothered the bassoon.

The Overture ended, the conductor bowed to the applause. The stemmed flood of strollers flowed again. This time a new gaiety was in the air. Packets of confetti, bought at a side-stall, were soon scattered in the faces of the unwary victims. A kind of gentle

horseplay, mingled with rustic coquetry, took possession of all. Even Lady Prudence flung her handful in the face of a dark Romeo, evidence of a past Italian invasion, and thus it was that the watch-maker's son came to exchange a merry laugh with a peer's daughter. And his laughter was a dazzling thing, observed Lady Prudence, turned young for a moment by a glint of bright eyes and flawless teeth.

Count Hugo, too, had bestowed confetti liberally in quarters where his reward was swift. Pamela liked the way he and the young aristocrats of the neighbouring estates took their fun with farmers' daughters and sundry maidens, dainty in their tight flower-printed bodices and frilled aprons.

Somehow Pamela, choked with confetti, found herself down at the bottom of the High Street, cut off from her friends. Suddenly, a dark archway, with a shuttered house towering up until its fretted eaves cut the starry sky, held her attention. The noise of rushing water filled the night air. Beyond a parapet she caught a gleam of the swirling current, light-rippled by the lamps. To get breath, she went towards the arch, but someone leaping out from it covered her with confetti.

"Oh!" cried Pamela, and then, throwing her last handful, she retaliated. The man ducked, laughing, and by an accident she knocked off his hat. Blinded by tumbling hair, he was a victim of her aim.

He rose, grinning, and looked at his adversary. Then, straightening himself—

"I say—you're English, aren't you?" he asked, with a broken accent.

"Yes—I'm sorry I've knocked off your hat," answered Pamela.

"That's all right!" he said, and began searching for it.

Pamela helped him, but it was dark where they stood. After a minute or two he found it.

"I'm so sorry—I hope it's no worse," said Pamela.

He brushed it and laughed. His face was towards the gleam of the light, and its strength caught at her heart. He had the face of a powerful man—broad-nosed, heavy-lipped, with searching eyes that had a magnetic life in them.

"I've not seen you here—have you just come?" he asked.

The question was an impertinent one, but she did not realise it. Instead, she was glad to answer him.

"Yes—last night—I am loving it," said Pamela.

"Oh—you don't know it, yet," he said. "You should be here in winter for the sports."

"I find the Spring wonderful enough. Do you live here?"

"Yes."

He paused. They stood in silence for a moment. They neither wished to move, and both were conscious of the wish. He lifted a hand in the direction of the parapet. "This is the stream that runs through the town—it's almost hidden by the houses. Do you see where it comes out?"

He leaned over the parapet. She had to lean too. His profile against the light was what she expected. He was thirty or more, with broad, heavy shoulders. His thin tweed jacket seemed stretched over his figure. And his hands, pressed on the stone, could break things, and also be gentle with them. Somehow, in a moment, she knew the whole of him, from his crisp black hair down to his riding breeches and heavy laced boots.

"What is that light up there?" she asked, fearing a silence between them.

"That's a light on the Kitzberg—a chalet restaurant.

It's a half-way house for the railway which they're building. You'll see the cable by daylight."

"I've seen it. Count Edelstein showed me it."

"Count Edelstein—you know him?"

"Yes—I'm staying at the schloss. Do you know him?" asked Pamela.

"Of course—we all know Hugo Edelstein—they're the oldest family here."

Silence again. They listened to the roar of the water. A window opened, laying a shaft of light across the stream. Behind them towered the church, built up from the road, above a buttressed wall.

Over the noise of the water, fainter, music sounded. The band was playing again. But they did not move.

He looked at her and she looked at him, a little breathless. What was it she wanted of him? If he suddenly took her in his arms she would be happy, and very angry. He wouldn't, of course. She feared he wouldn't.

And as she wondered, he did, with the quiet determination of a man who encounters no opposition because he knows so well the power of his attraction. He held her, breathless, against him, kissed her unhesitatingly, unhurriedly, so that his mouth lay upon her own, with something of his strength flowing down through her, thrilling and yet numbing in its irresistible force. As slowly as he had taken her, he put her off from his lips, his eyes never faltering in their smile of conscious conquest. His hands slipped down from her shoulders, along her arms to her cold hands.

"I'll be outside the schloss gates to-morrow night, at nine," he said, holding them. His pressure increased before he released them.

"So, good night," he said.

He disappeared under the dark arch, whence he had leapt upon her.

Pamela could not move. The swirling water, the band distantly playing, the light up on the Kitzberg, and high, remote from all, the starry, moonless night —these were somehow not of the world. Nor was she, in some strange manner. This thing that had happened had never happened before. It was shameful, but she was not ashamed. It was outrageous, but she was not outraged. What was happening to her, with her hands of ice and her heart of fire? Who was this man, who had so easily compelled her, almost without a word? And, having been compelled, she still felt no anger, nor reproach of weakness. Was it the night, the intoxication of this scene, the music and festive air, with the old shuttered houses looking down on the carefree burghers, as they had looked down for centuries? Or was it simply Spring in the Tyrol enchanting her?

She had no answer to these questions singing in her head. She returned to the crowd, the lights and music.

"Hello—we've lost you!" exclaimed Count Hugo.

There was something in her eyes, a new beauty that checked his words. With flushed cheeks and a half diffident glance she turned to Miss Bennett and Mr. Crawley.

"I'm covered in confetti—they have no mercy!" she laughed, conscious that Count Hugo's eyes were upon her.

"Come, Miss Kemp—let's have our revenge," he cried, and went to the stall to buy several packets of confetti. "Now—Mademoiselle's my first victim—she gave me a neckful just now. Follow me!"

He pushed himself through the rioters, quick-eyed for attackers, and Pamela followed where he shouldered a way. Had it been possible she would have escaped back to the schloss. Everyone must see

something had happened. But in another mood she felt the gay spirit of the evening lifting her out of her long reserve. She did not know, but it was the Austrian *gemutlich*—good-natured happiness, if the word must be translated—that was warming her nature.

"Hold on to me!" shouted the count, and Pamela placed her hands on his shoulders as he threaded his way through the carnival crowd. They ran the gauntlet of batteries of confetti from grinning youths and apple-cheeked girls. A swarthy young giant, a veritable gipsy, seized a young woman and kissed her, half-hearted protests drowned in the cries of his companions. It was so good-natured, with a clean grace despite its unconcealed animality. They were dancing now in rings and chains. The band was playing "The Blue Danube." It signalised the last piece. At that moment the count detected Mademoiselle. She was gossiping with the doctor's wife. He did not hesitate about a rear attack. A bag of multi-coloured paper was emptied over her head, as she screamed, surprised and protesting.

He was off again, his arm around Pamela, propelling her through the crowd. The band was moving.

"The procession—they light torches and make a procession through the town!" he cried, excitedly.

All the people were streaming towards the band, which was getting into formation in a side street. Small boys proudly held aloft metal lanterns, that might have served the Watch of the Middle Ages. With a grand flourish of the baton and a great blare from the band, the pied-pipers marched, headed by the rotund conductor, goose feathers erect in the broad-brimmed hats of blue felt. The swaying lights glinted on wind-blown faces and gilt buttons as they set off at a swinging pace. The crowd on the pavements

applauded as they passed. Behind them trooped the whole youth of the town, arm-in-arm, ten abreast.

Tum-ti-ri-tum-tum went the band. The houses echoed it back, the hills heard it, perhaps the far heights, star crowned, caught it. Singing and laughter and good-natured hugging, with now and again a snatched kiss by lusty lads from unreluctant lasses, peasants and shopkeepers, burghers and local gentry—the rout went trooping down the street in the wake of the heady music.

Pamela, borne along by the count, was in that medley. So was Miss Bennett and Mademoiselle, the former somehow linked with the gipsy-looking lad; the latter, hopping bravely between the shoemaker's son and the apothecary's daughter. As Pamela swung by the crowd on the pavement, she caught a glimpse of Lady Prudence, faintly approving, standing between the countess and Mr. Crawley, who waved to them. For some reason, at that moment Pamela felt a little self-conscious, as she passed, her husband's arm in hers. Of course it was nothing. They were only enjoying themselves.

Suddenly, down by the church, the band stopped. Out went the lights. This was evidently the signal and excuse for a last demand of tribute. The girls wriggled in the arms of the youths, who smothered their laughter and cries with ardent kissing. Perhaps the count forgot himself in the general climax of carnival. His arms went around Pamela, but with both hands on his chest she pushed him away with a quick defensive action. He was repulsed at once, and laughed at her a little awkwardly. As she looked at him her resolution failed, so ardently that flame of his manhood burned for her tribute. But he did not attempt again, and he released her, disappointed, had he known.

" Let's get back to the others. Isn't this *platzmusik* jolly ? " he asked. They both knew it was a banal question, to cover the self-consciousness evoked by her repulse.

" It's delightful. I've never enjoyed anything so much," agreed Pamela.

" We must come again—there's another on Wednesday."

They walked up the High Street, with tranquillity settling upon it as the lights went out.

She had let an unknown man embrace her. And the count she had repulsed at a moment when there was every excuse.

No. There was no excuse—not for the count. He was married. His wife had seen them go by, dancing arm-in-arm. It was all right, of course, though Pamela had rather they hadn't been seen.

It was that man she should be angry with. It was amazing of him. And of her. What self-confidence, to imagine she would meet him outside the gates at nine to-morrow !

" Well, here you are ! " cried Mr. Crawley, having collected Mademoiselle and Miss Bennett. Lady Prudence and the countess were behind. " How do you like *platzmusik*, Miss Kemp ? "

" It's most picturesque," replied Pamela, not knowing what to reply. Picturesque, what a word for a night like this !

" I am so glad they keep alive the old folk customs," said Lady Prudence. " They do well to preserve their native airs."

" Airs ! " exclaimed Miss Bennett. " It's not airs that keep this thing going—it's the excuse for romping and kissing. I always wish I were nineteen when those lights go out. Perhaps one night some poor fool will think I am ! "

"Now, really, my dear!" protested Lady Prudence.

The count was walking with the countess, who was very quiet.

"Cold, Anna?" he asked.

Pamela did not hear her reply.

XIII A LIGHT LADY

I

THE next morning, on waking, Pamela sat up in bed, while Greta opened the shutters and brought in her breakfast. Was it Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday, and had she been at Kitzburg a week or a month? So much had happened, so much was changed in her, that Pamela began to find the old life quite unreal. This was the second full day at Kitzburg—and it seemed as if she had been here a year. It was still more difficult to realise that she would have to go back to that dreary world from which she had escaped. Could this be Pamela the typist, eating minced and mashed with a twopenny cup of coffee at noonday, and swinging on a strap in the Metropolitan scrimmage at six o'clock? Was it only a week ago, with leaking shoes and clammy macintosh, she had stood herded on the pavement, while a policeman called a halt in the traffic roaring by? Scarcely a glimpse of sky, not an eddy of fresh air, not a moment of leisure, with second-rate food and second-rate clothes, and servility beginning and ending the day.

Poor Mr. Jenkinson, poor brave everybody in London town! What had Fate done to men and women that their days and their youth must be crushed out,

timed to bells, bells to awaken them, bells to make them jump in obedience. A week ago she had been a number, clocked in and clocked out, with tuppences deducted for every five minutes she was late. And now here she was, a lady!

Yes. Let Lady Prudence sniff. Breakfast in bed at the hour one chose, with a smiling maid to say "*Guten Tag!*" to prepare the bath, to open the shutters and flood the room with sunshine. Wasn't that living like a lady!

Oh, yes, undeniably it was! But, reflected Pamela, ladies didn't let themselves be kissed in dark archways by unknown men. Last night her conduct had been disgraceful. This wonderful liberty had gone straight to her head.

She gazed out of the window. The mountain opposite was mottled with fields and pinewoods. Cowbells tinkled faintly somewhere. She heard the water coursing down the ravine. On the carved balcony of a chalet, perched on the hill, stood a neat row of flowerpots, aflame in the sun with purple gentians, crimson azaleas, yellow primulas and pink anemones. The gable was surmounted by a little belfry, also carved. It gave the alarm to neighbours when fire, the demon of those wooden dwellings, menaced them. In the trim garden a man worked. The sun glinted on a coloured glass globe mounted on a stick. It was like the magic globes children hung on their Christmas trees. This was a golden one, in some gardens they were blue. She had asked what they were for. Miss Bennett thought they were for warding off the evil eye, but the count said this was not so. The peasants liked to see their gardens mirrored all around them. They liked to see their flowers in the golden globes, and the moon and stars in the dark blue ones.

"But they seldom see the stars. Like their poultry, they go to bed at dusk and get up at sunrise," he added. "Their huts in moonlight become toys left by children gone to bed."

But the chalets were lively enough this morning. Cocks crowed, dogs barked, children's voices rose.

A voice rose louder than these, angry. A man's voice, in the room next to hers.

"You maka me a figure rideeculoso. Si! I no more attenda you to the salon. No! I am a man, not a dog to follow. Pay me my monies! The weemins, they stare at me. They say the things I know, the true things. I am no secretario. No. I am not! That is well, if you pay me the monies."

"You'll not have a penny if you stand shouting at me like that," answered a woman's voice. "Go into your own room. I have not sent for you."

"Sent for me! Sent for me! *Dio mio!* So you senda for me now, eh? I maka love as you shall have the pleasure. So! No, I come when I will. I not go wanna step from dis place. You pay me tree tousand lire. *Subito*, or I shout whata you wanta me for!" screamed the enraged voice.

"As you're shouting now, I see no reason for paying you. And why should I? For three months you have lived on me. You can go. You are useless."

"Go! Ah, you dispeekable woman. Why do I leave Rome? Why do I cease to barber where it is the season when I maka de most tips? I am beautiful. I am ze sun-god, I am ze Apollo, you say. I inspire ze great work you make. My eyes are ze whole world. I am to love you or you drowna—you shoota yourself! You weep ze whole nights. You implora me and maka presents. I am ze one son of my modder who adores me. I am good but you maka me to——"

"Stop, you low dago!"

"Dago!" screamed the man. "Me dago! Me—Apollo you say! Now dago! *Nome di Dio!*"

"Put down that scent bottle—no smashing tricks here, you poor mutt! Gimme that bottle! Aw——"

There was a crash. Pamela's heart stood still. What was happening?

Someone was crying now. Yet it didn't seem like a woman's sobbing. No, it wasn't, for she heard the woman's voice again—

"You boob! Get up, you damp dago. You can't sniffle money out of me. Go back to your barber's shop! Shaving chins and taking tips is all you're fit for. And I called you Apollo, did I? Well, I guess I was dazzled too much when I saw you."

The sobbing continued.

"You are cruel to your René. How do I go back? You maka gentlemens of me. I like ze life so. Now you not love me some more. *Dio mio!* How sad is the life!"

The voices were lower now. They continued to quarrel but inaudibly. So that was the position. Miss Bennett had sniffed at the secretary. Well she might. What amazing lives some people led, thought Pamela. And she had a troubled conscience this morning because she had let a strange, but attractive, man kiss her forcibly last night. No, not forcibly. She must be honest with herself. She hadn't resisted. She had enjoyed the experience.

But it must never happen again.

He would be outside the gates at nine o'clock tonight. The impertinence of the man!

Pamela finished her toilette. This silk kimono she was wearing had been dreadfully expensive, but it suited her. Pausing before the cheval mirror, she admired the way it fell, its luminous curves, its proclaimed luxury. It was a pity it could only be worn

in a bedroom where no one saw it. The colour suited her perfectly.

Poor Count and Countess Edelstein with people like this in their house. It was impossible to know just how guests would behave.

Did that man believe she would be there at nine o'clock? Assurance like that was based on experience. She had no idea what he was really like, except that he was terribly compelling. His eyes knew her, every mood of her, and without words he stripped away reserve. No, she would not be there at nine o'clock. She dare not.

Why ever was she debating the point? Was the Spring going to her head? She had snubbed Count Hugo who, for all his easy manner, had never presumed, as that man last night.

This morning she dressed entirely in white. A second time the cheval mirror revealed a vision that pleased her. Vanity now. Lightheadedness last night, and now vanity.

"Pamela, pull yourself together, or you'll go rapidly downhill. You're living on capital which won't last. You're pretending to be a lady of independent means when you're only a typist without work. And now you're losing your self-respect, my girl."

So said Pamela to herself as she prepared to leave her room.

"But it's a beautiful life!" she said, taking a last look out of her window on a world of flowers glittering in the sunshine. Beauty, like champagne, could go to one's head. She must beware of it.

II

This morning Pamela decided to go up the ravine and see the waterfall whose roar was distantly heard in her room. She went down through the schloss, the

staircase plunging like a well to the antlered entrance hall with its great studded doors. They were open, and, silhouetted against the sunshine in the courtyard beyond, stood a man. Her heart jumped within her. But her fears were needless. The man in the doorway was the Italian secretary. He turned as he heard Pamela and bowed to her. He had made very quick recovery from his tearful condition of a short time ago. Now he was all smiles as he said good morning. Had the Genius paid him the three thousand lire, or had the smashed scent bottle re-established his equanimity? Pamela felt tempted to ask him.

Then she saw the reason of his presence in the doorway. There was a large touring car in the courtyard, with a chauffeur waiting at the wheel and a Borzoi hound sitting in the back. The whole thing gleamed in the sunshine, and reflected wealth at every point, from the flying stork on the radiator to the impressive array of instruments on the mahogany dashboard. The chauffeur was gloved, and liveried in purple, a white top to his peaked hat.

"Madame ees going to Salzburg. She works too hard. I insista she taka ze air. It ees too much, verra much too much she does," said the secretary. "It ees a beautiful day—*bellissimo giorno!*"

He spread out his hands, thin, beautiful hands, with a Latin expressiveness. Yes, he was, just now, the young Apollo. It seemed impossible that a short while back he could have been a screaming, hysterical cur.

There was a frou-frou behind them. They both turned. The chauffeur sprang down from his seat.

"Ah! Good morning! Isn't it just too heavenly! I feel the earth is a prayer this morning, the prayer of the young Spring!"

It was Madame, her maid half hidden in the dark interior. The Borzoi jumped down, and was caressed

by a heavily jewelled hand. A rope of pearls slipped over a blue silk gown as she stooped. A diamond clasp scintillated on the ribbon of a hat that fitted her head like a knight's casque—the half-veil her visor. Blue-lashed eyes and scarlet lips completed the woman who must be looked at.

"*Povero René*—he has such a headache, he can't come with me," said Madame, explaining to Pamela, as she took a dust-wrap from her maid. Her white hand passed tenderly over René's brown brow with almost motherly compassion. "You must rest, *caro*—you must not work any more. The book is finished. We are liberated!"

"*Prenez garde de m'sieur,* Marie," she adjured the maid.

Madame Baker stepped into the car, the Borzoi leapt up beside her. What a picture! And Madame knew it was. She lifted a fragile hand, warning the young blond chauffeur closing the door—

"*Seien Sie vorsichtig,* Fritz!" she said.

Italian, French, German, so easy! Pamela was forced to admire.

"Salzburg will be *ravissante* to-day!" exclaimed Madame to Pamela.

"Is it far?"

Madame Baker looked quickly at Pamela.

"What—you haven't seen it?"

"No, I only came two days ago."

"Oh, but you must see it, my child. Come with me—why not? There's plenty of room. And what a day—*che magnifica giornata!*"

Her hands opened and swept the air. It was worthy of René, quite Latin in its expressive action. Pamela was thrilled, but she demurred politely.

"Oh, no, thank you—and I'm not ready."

"I can wait—but you are charming, so. *Vite,*

Marie. *Envoyez un pare-poussière pour mademoiselle!*" she commanded. "Of course you must see Salzburg! It is charming! And I want company. I must live away from my characters now, for they obsess me. Ah, this artistic temperament. Poor Signor Cavello knows it only too well!"

"Signora, you are notta right to say so. You are verra kind. Ah, so kind, so clevair! *Si!*"

The secretary looked at her with ardent eyes—a little swollen, Pamela detected.

The maid returned with a wrap in which she clad Pamela.

"Sit here, my dear. Down, Calvin!" cried Madame, motioning to a place at her side.

"Calvin?" enquired Pamela. "What a singular name for a dog—isn't he lovely!"

"Yes. He was born in Geneva, and bought near the Reformation monument, hence his name."

The chauffeur tucked them in, shut the low door and went to the wheel. The car trembled slightly.

"*Au revoir*, Marie. *A rivederci*, René!"

He bent his sleek black head, took the outstretched hand, white and pink in his own brown one, and kissed it lightly. The salute of a perfect cavalier.

The car crunched over the gravel, swung out through the gate. The morning, the old castle, the secretary, the maid, all smiled at them. Oh, this was wonderful, royal somehow. There should have been a crowd to cheer, or a few friends to see her. But no one saw them. Their glory was shed in vain.

So Pamela thought. But Miss Bennett, attracted to the window by the sound of the car on the gravel, looked down and gasped.

"Prudence—if that Baker woman hasn't got Miss Kemp in her car!"

"You mean," corrected Lady Prudence, looking

up, as she wrote a letter, "that Miss Kemp has got into the Baker car. But is it surprising? Birds of a feather adventure together!"

"Prudence! There are moments when you are contemptible!" retorted Miss Bennett. Not for worlds would she let her friend see she was really perturbed.

At a lower window a young man, having risen from his desk, to see who was leaving the courtyard, had a swift glimpse of two ladies reclining in the back of a long Rolls-Royce touring car. His comment was shorter and more forcible than Lady Prudence's.

"Well, I'm damned!" he said, in admirable English.

XIV SALZBURG

I

Black and white are colours the wise painter shuns. They are too positive, they kill the subtlety and strength that we can obtain from a less affirmative colour through which the high lights are reached by relativity of tone. In the judgment of character, too, the experienced witness of life hesitates to divide mankind into devils or angels. The elements are indeed so mixed in us that there is cause for hope and despair whenever we pause to reflect upon this strange amalgam of emotions we call the human being.

Madame Baker, for instance. She was probably a bad woman in the good sense of the term. Pamela recalled the story of a light lady who had lived opposite to them in Hollyhock Villas. She lived much

alone, but twice a week a motor-car stood before the house. 'Kept' was the sentence pronounced upon her. No one called, although she was known to be kind to beggars and animals. When she emerged from her house, Pamela watched her with mingled wonder and distaste. She didn't look bad. Indeed, out of that street she doubtless passed for a respectable woman. Her dress was neat, her face was unpowdered. She read novels, bundles of novels, for always she could be observed returning from some subscription library, with her parti-coloured volumes, a Skye terrier on a leash and a most unabashed look in her eyes.

"What impertinence—I don't know how she dare show her face!" had declared old Mrs. Kemp.

"But she lives very quietly, grandma," said Pamela. Had she dared to confess it, she longed to talk with the dark lady. "And she looks nice."

"I don't suppose she could live as she does if she didn't," observed the old lady, with a sniff. "I'm sure it's not a pleasant thing for the neighbourhood."

They would not confess it, but this woman provided the whole street with ceaseless interest.

"Why, the man's quite a gentleman!" said a neighbour, having watched his arrivals from the corner of her lace curtains.

"It's generally gentlemen who carry on like that!" replied Mrs. Kemp. "Respectable working men have their hands full keeping one wife."

No, there was no mercy for the light lady across the way, indeed she was all black.

Pamela realised that, in old Mrs. Kemp's mind, there would have been no toleration for Madame Baker. She was living in sin, which was in no way alleviated by the fact that she was riding in a Rolls-Royce. What then, Pamela asked herself, was she

doing in that car. Had she succumbed to the lure of wealth, or was it, as last night, something in this Spring air that wrought havoc with the conventions?

Yes, Madame Baker was charming. She talked of her work. Her whole life was devoted to her novels —" each with a message for the comfort of poor tired souls seeking a little sunshine, my dear." She talked of her travels, which had taken her all over the earth, from her home in Alabama, westwards, circling the earth via Yokohama, Pekin, the Gobi Desert, Tibet, the Himalayas, Teheran and the Asian plains. You mentioned a mountain, she had climbed it; a sea, she had sailed it; a city, she had lived in it. And all for her work. " One must live to write, my dear. One's pages must vibrate with the chords of the innermost sanctuary. Our minds should dwell on the coasts of the Mystic Shores. In tune with the Infinite, as is so well said. But only the Omuz knows the key."

" The Omuz? " echoed Pamela. She could scarcely listen, so enchanting was this valley through which they threaded their way, on a road like a white ribbon.

" I am a follower of the great teacher, Prince Ibn im Mehtouz—he is the direct descendant of the Lhama Omuz, and is the repository of all knowledge. But one day, I will explain it to you," said Madame Baker, with a smile. " I am now compiling the Omuzan Cookery Book. We hold that the stomach and the soul are closely related."

What a strange woman, and how fantastic she made the world. Pamela felt she was losing her grip on reality. But the car, the chauffeur and the Borzoi were real. Also this flowery alpine valley, and the village they were passing through. Brown-legged boys were driving belled cattle down the street.

Some women came out of the old church, baroque-faced, with a Byzantine belfry. The women wore round little black brimmed hats, from which two broad ribbons streamed down their backs as far as the hem of their skirts, their hair drawn tightly back into a bun that buttressed the shallow brim. Half a dozen young men in leather shorts and nailed boots, with rucksacks on their shoulders, waved merrily as the car passed. A dachshund on a chalet balcony barked at the Borzoi in the car.

A little old woman lifted the bar of a toll-gate for them to pass. Around was the noise of running water, a sawmill and the rhythmical hammering of the blacksmith in his forge. Four hundred years had brought this village nothing except hard labour, rustic peace, misery of war and, now, the dust of motor-cars.

They were still two hours from Salzburg, where they were lunching. Madame Baker was more natural now. Pamela fell under her charm. What a pity she hadn't read any of her books. After a while they ceased to talk, watching the changing panorama of mountains, range opening beyond range as they climbed the pass.

At one o'clock they came to Salzburg, the old seat of the prince-archbishops. High above the river towered the castle hill with the fortress-palace of the splendour-loving princes of the Church. All around rose the mountains bounding the Bavarian plain.

Their car slowly penetrated the little town, with its leafy promenade along the seven-bridged river. They found the Residenz-Platz, with its sixteenth-century imperial palace, the old seat of the grand dukes, and then the cathedral, with its florid stucco ornamentation. They left the car near the statue of Mozart. For this was Mozart's town. Here they preserved his birthplace, his piano. Nothing seemed changed since

the eyes of the infant prodigy had first opened to its light in 1756.

A quarter of an hour later, modernity had triumphed. A railway carried them up eighteen hundred feet to a restaurant set under the shadow of the old fortress. They ate with the world below stretched out like a map—afar, the mountains; beneath, the roofs of Salzburg, a child's toy-box, red and pink and brown with the river drawn like a grey ribbon through a patchwork quilt of fields.

Lunch finished, they toured the eagle's eyrie of the prince-archbishops, who had held spiritual office with temporal power, and backed Bulls with cannon balls.

"It is sad to see all this splendour so faded. But we are on the threshold of the Great Dawn, my dear," said Madame Baker, as they walked through the castle. "We are no longer physically based. The Pyramidal Apex is almost reached."

Madame Baker seemed to be addressing a public meeting now. All her words were uttered as if spelt with capitals. Bewildered, and fearing another outbreak of Omuzism, Pamela contented herself with "Yes."

"I know I was here—five hundred years ago," said Madame Baker, calmly. "That is the reward of achieving the Time sense. There is no Yesterday, no To-morrow. It gives a feeling of such Power, such Responsibility. But we must go now. We have a long drive home."

II

It was dusk when they returned. As they entered the courtyard another car came out, swerved to avoid collision and crossed towards the garage. A young man at the wheel of an enormous touring car laughed as he swept by, avoiding a crash by a

hair's breadth. Fritz glared after him, but the serene young man swept on, his long hair fluttering in the wind.

"How very reckless!" said Madame Baker, recovering breath. They drew up to the door. The toot of a horn brought out a servant, and following the servant came Marie. Yes, M'sieur Cavello's head was much better, but he was lying down. He asked to be called as soon as Madame arrived.

"Poor boy, I'll go to his room," answered Madame Baker, unwrapping.

Pamela thanked her for a wonderful day. With the smile of a queen, Madame Baker went into the house, a few last words in German thrown to Fritz and a rapid conversation in French with Marie. For a moment, Pamela felt like a lady-in-waiting. They had returned to the palace. The superb car floated away. The golden dusk of evening lay on woodland and courtyard. Yellow lights burned down in Kitzburg. An evening star glimmered over the faint Königsberg. A dog barked distantly. The roar of the torrent down the ravine had grown louder. It was the bewitching hour when Beauty took a deep breath of wonder.

"Excuse me, weren't you in that car just now, when I came out? I'm afraid I scared you."

A voice behind Pamela made her start. She turned, to find a young man, hatless, standing near her, his face indistinct in the dusk.

"Oh—yes—we thought we'd run into you," said Pamela, recovering.

"That's a nasty corner, those trees made it dark. I'm sorry."

His voice was pleasant, with an accent which, in Pamela's ears, stood for all the things that meant money, education, birth. She liked the youth of

him, the affability in his manner. It pleased her to feel she was of the same race.

"Isn't it jolly?" he asked, not waiting for her to continue. "Means a fine day to-morrow, I suppose. We've come from Munich to-day—marvellous scenery!"

He was so full of the joy of life. He crammed his hands into his pockets and surveyed the ravine, the mauve hills, the far mountains.

"Have you been long here?" he asked.

"Two days—I adore it!" cried Pamela.

"My aunt seems stuck here. I'm cramming German in Munich—so I've run over to see what's the attraction. I always suspect its bridge!"

"Your aunt?"

"Lady Prudence—a stiff old dear," he said, laughing.

"Oh, Miss Bennett's friend," exclaimed Pamela. She liked him more and more.

"That's a bright soul!" cried the young man. "My name's Thurlestone, if it interests you."

"It does," said Pamela, boldly. "And my name's Kemp—but I'm not one of the Keedon-Kemps, though I told Lady Prudence I was."

He gave a merry laugh, and pulled a hand out of his pocket.

"Hurrah! Aunt's a terror for tufting. It served her jolly well right. How d'you do?" he added, holding out his hand.

"How d'you do?" responded Pamela, taking it.

He laughed again and shook her hand.

"Now we've been thoroughly English—won't you take me round the place?"

A rather breathless young man, thought Pamela, but extremely wholesome, with his fresh pink face and good teeth. Still, there was Lady Prudence to consider.

"Won't your aunt——" she began.

"My aunt's out somewhere, and my valet's unpacking—and I haven't talked to an English girl for a month. So have pity on me."

There was no refusing the plea in his voice. Pamela showed him the terrace, the garden and the tennis courts. In ten minutes he had explained his life. His elder brother was in the Guards. His sister wrote poetry, drove in the Brookland races and had been the first woman to cross the Sinai desert. He had been at Eton and Christ Church, and was going into the Diplomatic Service, for which he was now at a crammer's in Munich learning German.

"There—that's all about me—what about you? You're an actress?" he asked.

"Good heavens, no! I'm a typist."

"How jolly!"

"Jolly? I don't find it jolly, sitting on a stool from nine to six, tapping out letters until my head's splitting," cried Pamela.

"Well—you're not doing it now. There's no sense in doing things you don't like, is there?" he said, as though that settled the question.

Pamela had to laugh.

"What a wonderful world you live in!" she said.

"I? Oh, Lord! Have you tried learning German?—just try!"

"Have you tried earning a living?—try that," retorted Pamela.

"Do you do it?" he asked, stopping in his walk and looking at her.

"Of course—I've never done anything else. I've done it since I was eighteen."

"That's marvellous," he said, seriously. "That's standing on your own feet. Jove! I wish I could

do that. Do you mean to say you work for your own living, without anyone to help you ? "

He seemed unable to believe that such a thing was possible, and for a moment, the first in her life, Pamela felt a little thrill in the fact.

" There's nothing so marvellous in it," she replied, laughing at his serious face. " In fact, I've rebelled —I've come here."

" To type ? "

" Good heavens, no !—to spend my money—and then go back."

He looked at her mystified and not quite sure that she was serious. He had grey eyes in this half-light. He was very young, very friendly and impetuous.

" I've no business to tell you this. Please don't repeat it. For a month I'm playing at being a lady—and it's most enjoyable ! " confessed Pamela.

" But you are a lady—what do you mean ? You're quite respectable. No, dash it ! I don't mean that —I mean—I say, you puzzle me, really ! "

She smiled at his protest.

" I must go in now, and it's too dark to see any more," she said.

" Which means I'm not going to hear any more ! "

" No."

" I shall die of curiosity ! " he exclaimed.

" Then die," said Pamela, quietly.

" I say, Miss Kemp—you're the jolliest girl I've met for a long time," he cried, ardently. " I was dreading coming here—and now——"

" I'm sure Lady Prudence will be wondering where you are," said Pamela.

" You're treating me like a little boy," he protested.

They had reached the door and entered the hall. Half-way up the staircase they met Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett coming down to the drawing-room.

"Tony! I wondered where you were, and you're not dressed yet. Dinner's in fifteen minutes," exclaimed his aunt.

"I've been in the garden with Miss Kemp—there was such a glorious sunset."

Lady Prudence had not noticed Pamela until that moment. Then she looked from one to the other. How had they come into contact so soon? But she said nothing, although her eyes said much.

"Do hurry or you'll be late for dinner, darling," said Lady Prudence, ignoring Pamela.

Little Miss Bennett saw the strained situation.

"I hope you've had an enjoyable day, Miss Kemp. We envied you your trip to Salzburg," she said.

Pamela thanked her and passed on up the stairs to her room.

"Janet—how could you say such a thing! We did not envy her, and nothing would have induced me to go with that woman!" cried Lady Prudence, indignantly.

"My darling Pru—I know all that, but I simply can't let you behave like a pig to that poor girl. She's not eloping with Tony yet."

"You surely don't imagine I——"

"There was the light of mésalliance in your eyes —you excommunicated the girl. And from what I know of Tony, he did all the rushing."

"Fortunately I don't understand your slang, Janet," replied Lady Prudence, coldly, finding her favourite chair in the drawing-room.

XV YOUTH

In the last forty-eight hours something had happened to Pamela. For twenty-seven years she had lived without discovering that she was in any way attractive.

No young man had anxiously retrieved her fallen handkerchief, or suggested that, somehow, her face was familiar and they must have met before. The office telephone had not rung, as on other typists' desks, bearing the ardent voices of young men enquiring "What about this evening?" She had heard of Galahads who insisted on sharing umbrellas on wet days, when poor girls had to get from office to Underground Railway, and she had seen other Galahads show unnecessary alacrity in surrendering seats to tired, if young, ladies. Yet these things had never happened to Pamela. But for her mirror, she might never have known she had a face. Here, in the Tyrol, in this enchanted land of running water and meadows clad with flowers, the miracle had happened. Somehow she had become attractive!

At dinner she sat opposite the count, with Mr. Crawley on her right. At the far end of the table, wedged in between Miss Bennett and his aunt, was Mr. Thurlestone, his black hair now severely brushed back, and lustrous with pomade. His determination to look in her direction, and to listen to a conversation quite out of his reach, must have irritated Lady Prudence. It was Miss Bennett who tethered the young man's conversation and forced him to do his duty as a table companion.

The count wanted to know how Pamela liked Salzburg. He was shocked because they had not stayed at Lofer, with its quaint inn.

"One day we'll go to Lofer, Miss Kemp. We'll have lunch in the old inn, and get Franz to play his cithern."

How tactless he was! The whole table heard his invitation.

"Do they play citherns here?" Pamela asked the countess.

"The peasants love them, and they play mandolins also. But the music's becoming all jazz now. You don't hear the old folk-tunes," said the countess.

Pamela glanced at the count. She hoped he understood now that every time he made a personal proposal she would talk with his wife. But the good-humour in his eyes gave her little hope that he felt rebuked.

After dinner there was no escape for Mr. Thurlestone. His aunt led him firmly to the bridge table, which left Pamela exposed to the count. The countess had disappeared. Mr. Crawley was partnering Miss Bennett.

Why had the countess left the drawing-room so early? Had she noticed her husband's deliberate attention to herself? Pamela felt angry. She could not possibly sit talking to the count the whole evening. Pleading a headache, she asked him to excuse her and went up to her room.

But in the room she found that she could neither read nor concentrate on writing letters, which she attempted. After a vain effort, she went to the window, opened it and leaned out.

The night was warm, with all the softness of Spring in its whispering tree-music. The mountains, immense and aloof, were silvered with a dim moonlight touching their snow-clad peaks, so that they shone as with an exhalation of purity. The clear voice of many waters, rising from the hidden ravines, only deepened the silence that lay over the valley and on the heights. A train, shunting somewhere in the direction of the town, with its sharp clattering noise, belonged to a world beyond, a world of hard reality from whence she had escaped.

It would be most lovely in the pine grove now, with the lights of the town below spread along the valley.

Putting on a wrap, Pamela left her room, went down through the house and slipped out noiselessly into the garden. Above her, on the first floor, the windows of the drawing-room glowed golden, their panes coloured with the rich quarterings of the Edelstein arms.

A dog barked, perhaps the Borzoi belonging to Madame Baker, who had not appeared at dinner. It seemed she had made peace with the count who had reluctantly agreed to her staying on. She had apologized for the scene in the morning. She had passed a dreadful night, and her secretary had been most impertinent. He knew how much women, with such gifts as hers, were at the mercy of their temperament. Not even the count could resist this explanation, so charmingly given, with such an appeal to his chivalry. Moreover, she had settled forthwith a heavy and somewhat overdue account.

This much had Pamela learned from Mrs. Waring, a watchdog of conversation, who had heard the countess telling Mr. Crawley what the count had told her.

"She's a proper mystery that woman! Do you know——" whispered Mrs. Waring, in a voice that must have been heard at the bridge table, for the players could not concentrate, and were trying to overhear at the cost of losing points—"do you know, my dear, that I wrote to my sister, who reads a novel a day, to tell me what she thought of her books, and to send me one out—if in a cheap edition. And my sister wrote back that she'd never heard of her, neither had any of the bookshops where she went!"

"Perhaps she's famous in America," had suggested Pamela. Mrs. Waring had a tongue like a chameleon. It picked up its victims and despatched them in one quick glitter of her eyes.

"Perhaps," echoed Mrs. Waring, in determined

damnation. "But I very much doubt if she's a five-per-cent!"

She chuckled at this, and seeing the bewilderment on Pamela's face—

"You don't follow that, do you? Well, one day I was complaining at my bank about only getting five-per-cent on my investments. And what do you think the manager said to me—such a nice man, my dear, with the sweetest of smiles. He said, 'My dear Mrs. Waring, better five-per-cent than ten-per-haps.' Wasn't that witty of him? So I divide people into five-per-cents and ten-per-haps now. And she's one of those."

So the gossip according to Mrs. Waring. The news that Madame Baker was to stay on rather pleased Pamela. It was not owing to anticipation of other excursions, it was rather that Madame Baker was a personality. She had added to the romance and picturesqueness of this castle, with her French maid, Italian secretary, German chauffeur, Russian Borzoi and English Rolls-Royce. To Pamela she stood for the marvellous cosmopolitan life, a representation of that world, glimpsed sometimes on the stage or screen, in which dinners were served in Rome, dances held in Vienna, divorces obtained in Paris and murders committed in Chicago. Life, in fact, with elevators rushing up to superb apartments, great cars waiting at fashionable hotels, gorgeous women in boxes at operas and in furs at race-tracks—all that heady, scintillating world of fashion in which sincerity is that last infirmity of ignoble minds.

In her few weeks of opportunity Pamela wanted to miss nothing of the world that must so soon swim out of her ken for ever. It may be that, in this shining firmament of fashion, Madame Baker was only paste amid the jewels, but she scintillated, and

in Pamela's grey life it was brilliance that attracted her.

And beauty. There was in her soul, beyond all worldly ambition, all thought of economic security, a passion for beauty. She had found it in the Tyrol, amid these fields aflame with flowers, these heights crowned with snow, these torrents filling woodlands with their undertones. It was beauty that held her now, deeper because more mystic, in this night, with its quietude and stars, with its old castle, window-lit, a human refuge built amid the timeless hills, mysterious itself with the things it had seen about its walls, heard in its rooms, watched from its towers.

Pamela walked along the terrace towards the pine-grove, whose path continued until it struck the road going up the valley. Nature, beautiful as she had never seen it before, had filled these days with enchantment. Yet, she knew well, there was a new excitement in her life, greater because it was human. She was being noticed, she was receiving attention. In an extraordinary manner, not of her own seeking, she had become somebody; not in the sense that Lady Prudence with her social pigeon-holes was somebody, or Miss Bennett with her bright mind, or Mr. Crawley with his intellectual bearing, or Count Hugo with his romantic air. No, she was somebody merely because she was just herself.

For how otherwise could she account for the things that had happened to her in the last forty-eight hours? There was Mrs. Baker who wanted to take her a ride, and the count who wanted to take her in the town, and now, to-night, young Mr. Thurlestone who wanted to talk to her. In England no young man had ever wanted to talk to her. No young man had ever realised she existed, and here two young men, two very attractive young men, with ample oppor-

tunities of attentiveness to young women, were embarrassing her with their friendliness.

Well, it wasn't her face. She had no illusions about that. It was a good face, with no weak curves of collapse or bleak adjutments; nor were her eyes narrow or small, protuberant or inset. But it was a face you passed in a crowd and failed to linger over after a preliminary glance. At its worst, it was an ordinary face. At its best much could be done with it. Well-coiffured, it bore up the art of the hairdresser very creditably. Well-gowned, it toned in with a picture either of grace or elegance. Gravely dressed, it was gentle; fashionably attired, it took a brighter hue from its costly setting. Altogether, a most useful face, and with her one asset—unrealised by herself since it was the integral and unassumed part of her life—with character, her face had moments of vivacity and purpose.

What Pamela did not know yet was that the full and joyous life of these days had brought forth her vivacity, giving to her personality a continuous power of attraction. Such creatures are we of environment.

Pamela was still thinking of blithe Count Hugo and eager Mr. Thurlestone when she emerged from the pinewood and found herself along the road that led up towards a group of chalets. In one of these lived the old Princess Hohenstein, who had been ruined by the war, and was now glad to give lessons in German and French to any visitors in Kitzburg. For four schillings an hour you could have lessons from this daughter of an archduke, whose husband had been one of the rich nobles of Europe, and the private secretary of the old Emperor! Poor old lady. She was eighty-one, reduced to a cottage and one faithful maid. There had been a time when she was a toast of the gentlemen of the gaiest and noblest Court in

Europe. To-morrow Pamela was taking her first lesson, which the young countess had arranged for.

Clocks striking in the valley caused Pamela to think of returning. The game of bridge might be ending soon, and there was no reason why she shouldn't enjoy a talk with Mr. Thurlestone. Lady Prudence was not going to have it all her own way.

Pamela followed the roadway downhill, therefore, that led her presently to the road outside the castle's grounds. She had never been along this road before, which continued past the gates. Nearer the castle she could distinguish on her left the sharp outline, against the moonlit sky, of the old stables, where Count Hugo had taken her the previous morning.

The pinewoods ceased suddenly, and the castle came fully into view with its brightly lit windows. The light from them blinded her slightly as she came out of the darkness. Thus it was that, with a sharp cry of fear, she suddenly drew back as a voice came upon her. It belonged to a man, standing in the shadow of the gates.

"How prompt you are—good evening!" said the voice.

For a moment, speechless with sudden alarm, Pamela could find no words. Then, dismayed, she recognised the stranger in the shadow. It was the dark man of the archway.

Summoning her voice, she responded as naturally as possible.

"Oh—I didn't see you! Good evening. I'm afraid I cannot stay," she said, knowing how useless it would be to explain that she had no intention of meeting him, that, actually, she had forgotten him.

"I see you are very sensible—not coming out of the schloss," he said, quietly.

"Out of the schloss—what do you mean?" asked

Pamela. She could see his face clearly now. He was hatless to-night, and dressed in the Tyrolean costume, with open neck, leather jacket and shorts. His eyes were extraordinarily bright, and she noticed again how red and full were his lips.

"Coming round by the wood! There's no sense in starting gossip, I agree," he laughed, slipping an arm through hers, as if to lead her away.

"Oh, no—you misunderstand me," cried Pamela, drawing back. "I didn't come out that way because —in fact, I hadn't thought of coming out——"

"Well, here you are—I suppose they're all bridge-playing?" he asked.

"Yes—I must go in now, I think," she said.

But, as if ignoring her answer, he put an impelling hand upon her bare wrist. She felt how warm and firm was his grip.

"We'll go up round by the chalets—there's a good path to the Amsee," he said. "You're not afraid, surely?" he continued, when she did not move. "It is quite safe—I know every inch."

"It isn't that. Please, I must go," said Pamela.

The next moment he had put his arms around her in an attempt to embrace her, but she pushed him away.

"No—good night," she said, trying to free herself.

He looked at her, puzzled by her action.

"Good night? But I thought—last night you——"

"Last night we lost our heads—at least, I lost mine. I really must go."

"But why have you come?" he asked, still holding her wrist. He smiled as he asked the question, and she knew by the manner of his smile that he was indifferent to her answer. So sure was he that she would not go now.

"You are holding me. Please, I must go!" said Pamela.

He made no reply, smiling on her. There was such confidence in him, such appeal in his dark eyes, that she felt again his tremendous attraction. Almost in panic, knowing how near she was to surrendering to his will, she tried to free her wrist. But he held her firmly, though gently.

"How nervous you are to-night!" he said, softly. "There is no one here. Last night there was——"

"Last night I was mad, I think. I scarcely realised what I was doing."

"Ah, so!"

He laughed lightly, his eyes smiling into hers.

"The blame is mine if you say it—if blame there be," he said, gently.

"We were equally foolish—it was the music."

"No—not music—nor foolish," he contradicted, slowly. "It was just us."

"What do you mean?"

"Us—nature. How lovely you are, do you wonder? I am a man."

"Stop. I can't listen to you. What things you say!"

He looked at her again, slowly, confidently, with his dark eyes searching her, so that she felt her will evaporate under his burning gaze.

"I say what you know already—there is nothing strange in it. It is on the face of all Nature. The birds sing it, the flowers are perfumed for it. Spring comes on the flood of it. Why fear ourselves?"

"I don't understand you. I don't know you. Please, I must really go."

"No!" he said, quietly.

She could not answer. The night seemed to listen around them, so still it was. But her own heart

shook her in its rising fear. Then a sound of a door slamming across the courtyard and footsteps.

"Oh—I must go—please, please!" she said, fluttering like a snared bird as he continued to hold her. Quickly, with a determined wrench, she freed herself from his hold. In open panic she turned and ran through the gates, in fear that he might follow.

The footsteps came towards her. She stopped running, bewildered.

"Why—Miss Kemp! What luck! I say, you're not going in?" said an eager voice.

It was Anthony Thurlestone, his face dark above the whiteness of his dress shirt.

"Yes—I was—it's turned colder, hasn't it?" she answered, desperately.

"Won't you walk—if I fetch you a coat," he asked, looking at her silk wrap.

"I think I'll go in now," said Pamela.

Where was that man? Would he dare to follow? Surely now that he heard voices he would realise he could not.

"Oh, Miss Kemp, please don't go in!" pleaded the boy. "You can't imagine what an awful time I've had. My aunt hates losing, but I simply couldn't concentrate on the game. She let Mrs. Waring take my place—I was too expensive to keep!"

He laughed lightly and lit a cigarette. The momentary flame made his face seem still younger.

"Isn't it your bed-time!" Pamela could not resist saying.

"Oh, I say, Miss Kemp, don't rub it in. I'm not such a kid. I'm twenty-one!"

"Well, I'm twenty-seven, and I'm going to bed."

"Oh, Miss Kemp—please don't. Let's go for a walk. It'll get you warm," he cried. "Do you

know, I think you're the most exciting person I've ever met ! "

" Thank you — but as your life's such a short one——"

" Now you're ragging me again. Well, I won't mind, so long as you don't go to bed. But seriously, Miss Kemp, you are exciting ! "

They walked on now. Pamela was careful to take the direction of the gardens, away from the gates.

" How am I exciting ? Now Madame Baker——" began Pamela.

" Oh, that Genius aunt talked about. I haven't seen her and don't want to," he said, impetuously.

" Don't be unkind to an unseen lady. She's really charming—and I should think most exciting ! "

" You're really exciting because you say things right out—like telling me you're twenty-seven."

" I don't find it at all exciting to be twenty-seven," said Pamela.

" No—but how many girls will let you know their age after they're twenty-one ? "

" Oh—then you know all about us ! " laughed Pamela. " Well, I've admitted twenty-seven—but I might be more, Mr. Thurlestone."

" I'm sure it's not more—in fact, it's less, if anything."

" Flatterer ! "

" And please, won't you call me Tony ? Everybody calls me Tony. I only get called Mr. Thurlestone when someone wishes to be unpleasant to me—like my tutor."

" Thank you—but without wishing to be unpleasant, I hardly know you, do I ? And if Lady Prudence——"

" Oh, hang Lady Prudence ! She seems to have

scared you. Stand up to her, Miss Kemp, and she'll crumble at once."

"I've too much respect for your aunt to wish to see her crumbled or humbled," laughed Pamela. "Now tell me more about your career. Diplomacy sounds terribly thrilling."

"Oh, I don't know anything about it yet—and it's a dreadful bore. After a tremendous time you become a Third Secretary, and then, after a more tremendous time, a Second Secretary, and after a still more tremendous time, Counsellor of Embassy. Then, if you're not quite gaga you get sent as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Bangkok, and your wife goes home and works away at dinner parties and drawing-rooms to get you pulled into Europe again. I see nothing thrilling in that! But my family's been doing it for generations, and as my brother simply can't stand it, I must. Tradition, you know, and all that sort of stuff. We've just enough brains to be safe, and not enough to be dangerous—and we're terribly respectable. Look at Aunt Pru!"

"I'm glad to hear it," said Pamela. "Respectability and mediocrity in these days of gin, jazz and genius are increasingly rare."

"Miss Kemp, do you know, I believe you could write!" declared Thurlestone, enthusiastically. "Gin, jazz and genius—I say, that's great!"

"No, it isn't—it's merely alliteration. That was Swinburne's downfall."

"I say, Miss Kemp, what a lot you know! I'm scared by clever women usually!"

"Thank you. But you're not scared by me—and I know nothing, really. Tell me, your sister writes books. What has she——"

"Oh, don't let's talk about the family! I want to

talk about you. Miss Kemp, I'd like awfully to know one thing."

"What's that?"

They were at the end of the terrace. The two chairs sacred to Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence stood vacant in the moonlight. Afar, the town jewelled the valley.

"I'd like to know your other name," he asked.

"It's Pamela!"

"That's a lovely name," he said, quietly, staring out over the valley. "Pam for short?"

"Yes."

"There's a lot in names."

"Is there?" she asked.

They stood together, the old castle behind them, and the light from the drawing-room windows falling on the flagged terrace and the creeper-covered balustrade. This boy's quiet courtesy towards her was very pleasant. There was a lot in breeding. He was good to look at, pleasant, safe, with nothing exotic, like that man beyond the gate.

"Oh, yes—you know, I simply couldn't love a girl that was called Mabel or——"

"That shows you don't know what love is. If you were in love, and her name happened to be Mabel, you'd think it the loveliest name in the world," said Pamela.

"Oh, I'm not silly like that!" he protested, smoothing back his hair.

"It isn't silliness—it just happens so."

"Well, I haven't fallen in love with a Mabel yet. In fact, I hadn't fallen in love with anyone, not really deeply in love until——"

He looked down, and saw his shoe-lace was undone. He stooped and tied it.

"I say, I'm talking awful rot, aren't I? Do you

know, learning languages just stops your brain working—and mine's so easily stopped," he said, looking at Pamela.

Yes, she was really lovely. This soft moonlight on her face made him tremble with the beauty of her. And her hair. The night wind played with it, as he would like to, if he dared. And her eyes. He didn't know what colour they were, for when she looked at him he couldn't see anything, he only felt a tremendous sensation, like when music went down your spine, or you scored a 'try' in the last minute, or you made the first high dive without mishap.

And Aunt Pru had referred to her as "a Miss Kemp, who probably works in an office." A Miss Kemp! Aunt Pru! The impertinence of her, with her long nose and goose-neck! And why shouldn't a girl work in an office—it was better than gossiping in a drawing-room. But poor Aunt Pru should be pitied. That Kelleys affair had been an awful knockdown. His mother had said they thought for a while she'd lose her reason. It wasn't as if that Keedon-Kemp girl had been pretty or rich. She'd just put her eyes on young Timmy Kelleys and drawn him out of a five-year engagement to Aunt Pru. Yes, things like that altered one, no doubt, even though the years went on, and old Kelleys was a hard drinker and deadly dull. But that was no reason for being unpleasant about Miss Kemp, who wasn't a Keedon-Kemp.

They walked a little way in silence. Never had he known a night so lovely. There was the scent of flowers and a soft wind loitering through the pines. Now, in the valley, the little lights of Kitzburg, coldly white on the roads and golden in the houses, spangled the darkness. Higher a new moon lightened the sky, star strewn. The Königsberg range, very dim and

bluish, might have been a prehistoric animal, its sleeping body blocking in the end of the valley. He began to understand now why there were such things as poets and why what they wrote wasn't all rot. He never had understood it, but now, strangely enough, he felt as they must feel, and he too would like to say things, wonderful things, wonderfully. But the words stuck in him. He could handle horses and cars, but words were devilishly hard to manage.

"I say, Miss Kemp—do you know, I nearly didn't come here to-day? I hesitated getting the car out in Munich, but a friend of mine wanted to go tramping around Kufstein—shorts, rucksack and a badger brush in his hat, all that sort of thing, you know. So I had to give him a lift then—and as I was well on the way, I thought I'd look up Aunt Pru. I've been frightfully shabby about calling, and she's quite a dear, if you get her the right side up. Just think what I'd have missed if I hadn't come!"

"Yes—Kitzburg is a lovely place—I nearly missed coming, too," said Pamela.

"Oh, I don't mean Kitzburg. It's all right—but it's people that make places."

"And mar them."

"You clear out then—whereas otherwise you want to stay on for ever. I have to go on Monday," he said, dejectedly.

"Then you've two whole days. And you can come back again. When I go, I'll never come back, never!"

"Why not—do you really dislike it?" he asked.

"Oh, no—not that. I mean, I shan't be able. I've never been so happy in my life as I am here—and I can never be so happy again. So I'm drinking it all up—like a man who knows he's going to be thirsty."

The boy laughed delightedly, his face near to hers, all his young body quick with animation.

"I say, you are jolly, Miss Kemp! But I don't see why you shouldn't come back, and why you shouldn't be happy evermore, like the princess in the fairy-tale. Because this is fairyland, isn't it?"

Pamela laughed too. His love of life was infectious.

"Yes—and for a short time I'm the fairy-princess. Does that sound conceited?"

"No—that's just what you are—and I'm the poor boy looking through the castle gate wondering how——"

"Nonsense, Mr. Thurlestone!"

"Please—you agreed—Tony."

"Then nonsense, Mr. Tony. You dashed through the gates in a great car at thirty miles an hour and nearly killed the Genius as well as the princess!" said Pamela.

"You've forgiven me that. But why won't you ever come here again?"

"Simply because I'll never be able."

"I don't understand—you're, you're—not engaged to anyone, Miss Kemp?" he asked, so seriously that she could not resist teasing him.

"Not at present—for a whole month or six weeks I'm disengaged."

"Oh, I do wish you'd be serious!" he said.

"I think it's most serious—especially if I can't get engaged again when the money gives out."

"Then it's money!" he said, relieved and enlightened.

"It's always money, Mr. Tony!" laughed Pamela.

"Please—won't you drop the 'Mr.'—it is a little 'governessy,' isn't it?"

She had to laugh again, louder this time. It came like music on his ears.

"I feel you'll be sending me to be bathed soon. But does money bother you very much?" he asked.

"Not nearly as much as it tries to," retorted Pamela. She would tell him the whole story. He was the kind of boy who would see the fun of it and not think her mad. But first he must promise secrecy.

"Because it'll spoil the whole plot. They're all guessing at present."

He promised solemnly, and when she had told him he made no comment, walking on in silence.

"There—I've killed all the romance for you," said Pamela. "Well, I find it romantic—and I'm enjoying my own fairy-tale immensely."

He stopped in his walk then, and laid a light hand on her arm. She looked at him in the moment of silence that followed, and was surprised to hear him stammer as he tried to speak.

"You're—you're——" he began.

"A little fool—I know I am!" said Pamela, defiantly.

"No—I don't mean that. Really, I don't mean that! I mean you're just wonderful. But it's all wrong you should be like that!" he said, almost fiercely, his hand quivering on her arm.

"Like what?" she asked, puzzled by his sudden change of demeanour.

"Bothered for money, and alone, and fighting for——" he answered.

"I'm not bothered for money, and I enjoy fighting."

"Yes—but——" he began again.

"Now, if you're going to pity me, we shan't be friends," she warned him.

"Pity you—my God!—I admire you tremendously, Miss Kemp, more than I know how to say. You must find me contemptible—and Aunt Pru and all of us who have——"

"Not a bit of it. You lead your lives and I lead mine. I haven't found anybody here is any happier or freer from worries than I am. Life's like that. It gets us so used to circumstances that we can be kings or cowards, as we will. It's the things we haven't got that make us happy—so long as we can hope for them. I've confessed. Now you confess!" commanded Pamela.

"What?" he asked.

"You've never enough money? Though I expect you've quite a lot."

"That's perfectly true. I'm always through my quarterly allowance a month ahead," he confessed, smiling. "My guardian writes me stingers whenever I——"

"Your guardian—haven't you parents?"

"A mother, yes. My father died when I was a kid. My uncle acts as guardian to my brother and myself—he's Aunt Pru's brother, and the biggest old maid of the two! You see, my mother was a Fairweigh until she became a Bottesford——"

"But your name isn't Bottesford—I thought it was Thurlestone?"

"Bottesford's the title, Thurlestone's our family name," he explained. "Henry, that's my brother—'s the seventh Earl of Bottesford, and I'm the no-account younger son. It's all jolly confusing, I know, but you can easily remember I'm called Tony. I say, how did I get up the family tree?"

"It was about money," said Pamela, a little dazed. Was he Lord Thurlestone, or simply 'Mr.' No, he would be Honourable, that's what peers' brothers

were. And they were called ' Mr.' and addressed as ' Hon.' Really, life in the higher circles of these days was getting beyond Pamela. She could manage count and countess, here in Austria, easily enough, although the count among his own people became the ' *Graf,*' and his wife the ' *Gräfin.*' And how did Lady Prudence, who wasn't a Thurlestone, and wasn't married, become ' Lady ' ?

" Money—oh, yes, I was saying that I'm always short—so I suppose you're right, but I'd be scared to death if I thought there was no money coming," he said.

" No, you wouldn't. Don't you see that nearly all the people in the world possess only a week's wages, and that at the end of the week ? Well, they live, and on the whole they're happy enough. You find them in theatres and cinemas, laughing easily. They manage to get married and furnish homes and bring up children. And somehow, in the end, after weddings and christenings, and giving birthday and Christmas presents, and taking holidays and falling ill, they get buried decently. You can't scare poor people with a possibility of dividends failing or companies closing down—unless they're employed by them. So you needn't be sorry for us. When we get just too desperate with the routine, we play the fool. Some go to cinemas, some to public houses, to forget things, and I've come to the Tyrol. When it's all over I'll be terribly sorry, but I'll start typing again from nine to six, with a something in my head and eyes no one can ever take away ! "

Pamela was a little breathless, carried away with the defence of her own society. She felt perhaps she had said too much to this charming boy, who couldn't help being out of touch with stern reality. He was just a helpless cog in the human wheel,

most helpless perhaps because he lacked the drive of desperation.

"Miss Kemp—I hope you didn't think I pitied you," he asked, very quietly. "It isn't that at all. I admire you—I admire you tremendously!" he said, with a quiet passion of emphasis. "I don't know why you bother to talk to me. I suppose it's all this plucky fighting that's made you so—so——"

"Frightfully egotistical? There! I've finished," interrupted Pamela.

"Oh, no, please go on. I could talk to you all night!" he cried.

"Well, you won't—for I'm going in and to bed—it's my splendid hour," said Pamela, turning back.

"Your splendid hour?" he echoed. That little lyric on life had caused her eyes to shine. They were beautiful before, but now—— He trembled with his intense desire to touch her, to feast his sight, to bring her closer and closer to himself so that she shouldn't escape. And she saw nothing of this, how she made him suffer with longing. How long had he known her? It seemed that ever he had known her. But to her he was still a stranger, still Mr. Thurlestone, or at best, Mr. Tony.

"The splendid hour when I read in bed!" laughed Pamela. "That crowns a perfect day."

He said nothing. He could find nothing he wanted to say just now, such tumult was in him. And it had all happened in two or three hours, since that first walk in the sunset.

They neared the door.

"Do you play tennis?" he asked, desperately.

"Yes."

"Would you—if you've nothing better—care to have a game, in the morning?"

"I'd love it," said Pamela. "Ten o'clock?"

"Thanks, awfully," he said. That would make the night tolerable.

Suddenly Pamela stopped, and gave a little cry. She had glanced at her wrist to see the time. Her watch was missing.

"What is it, Miss Kemp?" asked Thurlestone.

"My watch—I've lost it," said Pamela, dismayed. It was a gold one, given to her by her father on her eighteenth birthday. Engraved on the back were their initials, with an arrow through them. She treasured it beyond anything she possessed.

In a moment Thurlestone began to search. But first he went into the house for a flash-lamp. While Pamela waited for him, searching fruitlessly in the gravel courtyard, she tried to remember when last she had noticed it on her wrist. She recollected it was when the clocks had struck nine in the town, for she had halted in her walk to correct the minute hand. It had been lost, then, after nine, outside the house.

Thurlestone, returning with an electric pocket-lamp, began the search. They retraced their steps along the terrace, inspecting every yard of their path, but without reward. Then, in a flash, Pamela knew where she had lost it. It would be outside the gates, where she had freed herself, in a moment of panic, from the grip of that man.

"I've just remembered—I might have lost it outside the gates. I walked round from the pine grove and came in that way," said Pamela.

"Hurrah—now we'll find it. It's lucky it's dark, because there's no one about, so they can't have seen it and taken it—though I'm sure they're all honest around here."

He searched with Pamela outside the gates, up and

down the road. Nothing. Again and again he searched. It must be somewhere about. He went down on his hands and knees in the dust, despite Pamela's remonstrance.

"I'm not going to bed until I find it," he said, doggedly. "You go in, Miss Kemp. Your splendid hour's ruined."

But she would not go in. Her hour was ruined, her whole night, without the watch. Anything but the watch, her father's last gift.

Their light brought out Mr. Crawley, and he, returning to the castle for more lights, brought out the count, who joined in the search. Then Miss Bennett had to come, and with her, of course, Lady Prudence.

"I rarely walk out at night—it gets so cold and dark," she complained. "And I never think of going out alone!" she observed, surveying the bent backs and scraping figures around her.

"It would do you good to take more exercise, my dear," said Miss Bennett, prodding the gravel with her stick.

"Miss Kemp wasn't alone—I was with her when she lost the watch," shouted Tony, from the ground.

"Oh, that's where you were!" exclaimed Lady Prudence. "We couldn't believe you'd gone to bed, Tony."

It was on the tip of his tongue to express the hope that she hadn't sat up for him. Why must she come mooching around, doing nothing, of course.

"I don't think Mr. Thurlestone was with me when I lost the watch. We were in the grounds all the time. But before that I had been for a walk along the road," said Pamela.

"It's most unwise to walk along these roads," commented Lady Prudence. "They are so rough in the dark, and anyone might be about."

"What if they were—no one's going to eat you," retorted Miss Bennett, now rather cross. "Well, if you'll all take my advice you'll waste no more time, but one chivalrous gentleman will get up in the first light of dawn and be the early bird to find the watch."

"Bravo, Miss Bennett—that's a great idea! I'll be the bird, Miss Kemp, your watch'll come along with your breakfast!" cried Tony.

They agreed it was the best plan. Pamela was about to say she, too, would get up, but the presence of Lady Prudence deterred her. That woman could think anything.

In the hall the men batted the dust off their trousers.

"Tony, just look at your knees! You've ruined your suit," complained his aunt.

"No, I haven't, aunt. And what if I had? I'll ruin my whole wardrobe before I'll be beaten. Miss Kemp's watch has got to be found!"

Pamela thanked them, and went upstairs to bed. But not to sleep. A fear had crept into her heart as they searched. Perhaps the watch was not lost. Perhaps that strange man had found it. In which case she would hear from him. He was becoming a cloud on the smiling landscape. "No bigger than a man's hand" ran the familiar quotation in her mind. Yes—but it was something in that man's hand, something in its power and beauty, that had attracted her before it had presumed to hold her; no bigger—and yet how big!

I

PAMELA slept brokenly, but towards dawn fell into a deep sleep. She was awakened by Greta tapping on her door and entering to open the shutters. Then she brought in the breakfast, which Pamela ordered for nine o'clock each morning.

This morning she had intended rising at eight, or earlier; for not only was she anxious about the watch, but also she had to be on the tennis court at ten o'clock for her game with Tony Thurlestone.

As Pamela turned to the breakfast tray she found a letter addressed to her in a big sprawling hand. "Dear Miss Kemp," it ran, "We have searched all over the grounds and out in the roadway, but have had no luck. I'm terribly sorry. The count and I were up at daybreak, so we don't think anyone can have picked it up. It's a mystery. I hope you won't feel too depressed to give me a good walloping at tennis this morning! Yours sincerely (Mr.) Tony."

So it was gone. That man had it. She had no doubt of it now.

Pamela lay back on her pillow and went through the scene of last night. To be quite fair, it was her own fault. Although he held her wrist firmly, there was no compulsion. It was her own panic on the approach of footsteps, following the sudden manner in which she had run into him, that caused her to snatch away her hand. It was quite possible that he had seen the watch fall, had picked it up, and was unable to give it back to her.

There was nothing to be afraid about in that. He would send her the watch if he had found it. It was foolish to let a little thing like this spoil her day.

She would dress and go to her game with that charming boy, and not let the matter worry her any more. She had a feeling of confidence, now, that the watch would come back.

How nice those men were to her last night! And Miss Bennett was a darling. But Lady Prudence inspired her with awe. She was made of granite, and not even Miss Bennett's chipping had any effect on her hard exterior. It was obvious, from the acid comments, that she disapproved of her nephew leaving the drawing-room, especially when it was for the purpose of walking about in the grounds with a young lady who was not one of the Keedon-Kemps.

Pamela laughed. There was something pathetically ludicrous about this fine old relic of Society. She had to be admired for her stiff back when everybody swayed to negro rhythms and revolutionary fashions. She had seen on a letter that Lady Prudence was D.B.E., Dame of the British Empire. The title fitted her admirably. Like the Rock of Gibraltar she stood, front erect, unassailable, for the whole British Empire. She was the stuff that had built Tudor manors, given birth to Elizabeths, Raleighs, Cromwells and Nelsons. One had to be fair to her. She was as sterling as a crown piece, with her individuality stamped on her by the Constitution she represented. And she was consistent in an age of inconsistency because she was untroubled by any imagination. Every sound nation had to possess metal of that kind in its alloy. Try her when you would, she rang sound.

Still, reflected Pamela, she had no desire to find herself in conflict with Lady Prudence, who was certainly ready for war. Pamela, in her eyes, was stamped an adventuress. Here was a rich young man of social standing, generous-hearted and impres-

sionable. Proper prey for the adventuress. There would be no more night walks for Master Tony, of that Pamela felt sure.

Rising and dressing in readiness for her game of tennis, Pamela was aggravating enough to hope that Lady Prudence's windows looked on to the tennis court. And viewed by nephew or aunt, she had nothing to fear. There was only one game she could play. It happened to be tennis, and she played it extremely well. It was good to be efficient in one thing.

II

There was another lady taking breakfast in bed. It was Miss Bennett, who enjoyed the hour of bright awakening. For she was one of those thoroughly healthy creatures who enter into immediate intelligence on waking. She could be bright at breakfast, which proves, without any medical examination, that, in the obstructive sense, Miss Bennett had no liver.

Waking at Schloss Edelstein was a true pleasure, declared Miss Bennett. You opened your eyes on Nature at her best, if it chanced that your bedroom window looked on Spring in the Tyrol, which is what Miss Bennett's windows did. In fact, they seemed to look on everything, for her room was situated in the corner turret, and the three windows surveyed the panorama, from the heights of green and white Kitzberg to the crags and screes of the Königsberg, with all the town of Kitzburg below in the long valley, red-roofed, cream-walled, as it straggled out towards the Amsee and the mountain pass.

Nearer, Miss Bennett surveyed the station of the

cable railway that was to rebuild the Edelstein fortunes, the various brown wooden chalets, with their vivid, flowery balconies under overhanging gables, the pinewoods running up the first two or three thousand feet of the mountains, bright green pasture lands, and meadows whose flowers lay in drifts of blue and crimson. And over all, touching everything to magnificence, and herding up the stray banks of morning mist like argosies of white wool, reigned the resplendent sun, beginning another day's journey over mountain and valley.

It must be confessed that, at this hour, little Miss Bennett was not as magnificent as the scene she looked upon with her sharp eyes. She wore a bright cotton wrap over her shoulders, souvenir of a morning in the bazaars of Damascus (it was of English origin however, and made for exportation), and such remnants of her hair as fifty-four years of intense inquisitiveness had left to her, were curled around wisps of the *Morning Post*.

As Greta busied herself in the room, for she was tipped to act as a kind of lady's maid, she carried on a lively conversation with Miss Bennett, who spoke fluent German. Indeed, fluency, whether in German, French, Italian, Spanish, Swedish or Magyar, was a knack of Miss Bennett's. Her brain seemed to be a kind of gramophone into which she inserted whatever language-disc she required, and out streamed fluent speech.

Greta, reduced to dumb show in so many of the guests' bedrooms, therefore relieved her pent-up thoughts in Miss Bennett's presence. It seemed that she had a reluctant lover, named Rudolf. He was six-foot-two, handsome, nineteen and stupid. The conquest of Rudolf had become a saga of which Miss Bennett heard a new chapter each morning.

"I told him he shouldn't spend his money on buying me things that are no use. What do I want with a stumpy umbrella—a nice sight I should look in the town, like a long-stalked mushroom! Besides, we want the money for furniture. But Rudolf's that wayward, miss. He spent two schillings on confetti at the *platzmusik* the other night, and all to throw at girls he says he cares nothing about! Is that coffee hot enough, miss?" broke off Greta.

"Quite, thank you. Will you pass me that book, and open the windows wider. Did you hear if Miss Kemp found her watch?"

"No, miss, she didn't. The count and the young gentleman were up before me this morning. I heard 'em scraping about as I was getting up. It's a terrible loss for the poor lady—and gold at that!" sighed Greta. "Well, I must get along, miss. Do you want that blouse?"

"No, thank you, Greta—it will do to-morrow. I'm wearing the white one."

The door closed. Miss Bennett buttered her toast —she insisted on toast wherever she went, and gave lessons in the making of it if necessary—and spread the marmalade, which she had had sent out from England and always travelled with; Oxford marmalade, for these foreigners called any sweet mess by the name of marmalade. The Italians had even given the name to one of the Dolomite Alps! Next she opened her book, an account of archæological excavations on the Ziggurat of Ur.

For an hour, with a good breakfast, a good book, a good bed and a good view, she would find life perfect. There was no one to interrupt, not even Prudence, who was a helpless prisoner in her maid's hands until eleven o'clock, the hour that she went to her chair on the terrace.

It was with annoyance, therefore, that Miss Bennett heard someone tapping on her door.

" Yes ? " she called. " What is it ? "

" Are you awake, Miss Bennett ? " asked a voice.

" Of course I'm awake—I don't talk in my sleep. What do you want, Tony ? "

" Please, may I come in ? "

" If you're brave, you may," replied Miss Bennett, putting down her book and pulling her cotton wrap about her.

The door opened. Tony Thurlestone, slender and white in flannels, entered. He closed the door after him and advanced towards the bed.

" Good morning ! I'm awfully sorry to barge in on you like this," he began, " but there's something I want you to do dreadfully, Miss Bennett."

She looked up at him as he stood by her bed, a figure of radiant youth. His hair was wind-disordered, there was a flushed haste about him, so that the blood heightened the colour of his cheeks and the animation in his eyes. She saw from the brown brow, his neck where the flannel shirt gaped, from his arms with their rolled-up sleeves, thoughtlessly attractive and vital in his youth, that he lived in the sun, was a creature born of restless enjoyment. She liked the boy for all the impulsiveness that would not be curbed. She remembered first seeing him at Eton, on the Fourth, with a flower in his jacket, and the smallest of shy-boy faces beneath the largest of shiny top-hats. He must have been about fifteen then, and now he was a lusty young colt of twenty-one. But all the Thurlestone men were ample and cheery, the women meagre and shy. His mother always reminded her of a rose that had been cut a week. She wilted, but the perfume of an old beauty was about her. Some of that beauty was renewed in her two boys.

"So you've 'barged' in because you want something 'dreadfully'?" commented Miss Bennett. "I speak seven languages, but I confess modern English keeps me guessing!"

"Oh—I'm sorry I'm slangy, but one grows out of that, you know. Miss Bennett, I do want you to help me," he said, pressingly.

"And what's the trouble? Also, do sit down. You make me feel so inferior, standing up there."

He straddled himself across a chair, folding his arms along its back, and resting his chin, began.

"It's about poor Miss Kemp. She's dreadfully upset over losing that watch. It was a special one, a present from her father, just before he was killed."

"Killed—how?"

"In the war. He gave her that watch on her eighteenth birthday. It had their initials on it. Gold too, with an expanding bracelet. So it was worth something. She really can't afford to lose it, apart from all the rest."

"It may turn up yet," said Miss Bennett.

"It may—but I'm afraid it won't. Now listen!" he said, jerking his chair nearer the bed.

"I am listening—and don't come any nearer or you'll be reading the advertisements in my curls."

"Oh, Miss Bennett, you are topping, really! I knew you'd understand," said the boy, enthusiastically.

"I'll agree that I'm topping, but I don't understand anything except that poor Miss Kemp seems to have lost a watch and we're sorry for her."

"Yes—we are!" he said, emphasising the 'we.'

"Is that the royal We, or do you mean 'us'?" laughed Miss Bennett, enjoying his seriousness.

"Both of us," answered Tony. "Now, I've a lovely plan. It's dreadful to be in this place without a watch—you walk for hours on these mountains and never realise what the time is."

"Depends with whom you are. In the garden, last night, you didn't really care about——"

"Oh, Miss Bennett, don't rag! This is really serious!" he protested.

"Sorry, Tony. Well?"

"Miss Kemp must have a watch. So when you see her this morning, you'll say that you'll lend her your wrist-watch until hers turns up, and then, when it doesn't, you can quite nicely ask her to keep it."

Miss Bennett looked at him doubtfully.

"My dear boy, apart from such generosity, I haven't a wrist-watch I can spare, even as a loan."

"I know you haven't. Look!" he said, triumphantly.

He drew out of his trousers-pocket a small black velvet case. When he opened it she saw a neat gold watch, with an expanding bracelet.

"Wherever did you get that?" she asked.

"Down in the town. Wasn't I lucky? There's only one decent jeweller's, and he just happened to have one with a bracelet like this."

"How much did it cost?" asked Miss Bennett, always practical. She picked up the watch, and examined the hall-mark.

"Oh—only twelve pounds," he answered.

She would have said eight, but she hadn't the heart to hurt him.

"Not dear," she said, "but I'm glad you find twelve 'only.' It would cost me a year's manicures."

"You see, Miss Bennett—it's a big loss for her—

she's not rich," he explained, a little anxious now for her co-operation.

"I know—in fact, she's poor—quite poor," agreed Miss Bennett.

"Then—she's told you?" asked the boy, emphasising 'you.'

"No—not a word. I've guessed it. She's come here in all new things—not that it's any business of ours. So she's told you?"

He looked at her embarrassed, put his hands on the chair and leaned back.

"Oh, not in that way. She's just full of pluck. I can't tell you, but you'd admire her tremendously if you knew what I know."

"I admire her without knowing," said Miss Bennett, quietly. "Now, about my rôle. I see I'm to do a little gentle lying, eh? You can't give her the watch because she couldn't possibly accept it from you, and even if she did—which I can't imagine—there'd be your aunt to deal with, for she'd find out soon enough. So I'm to lend her my watch, and later, in deep sorrow, for the non-appearance of her own, I'm to insist that she keeps mine, which I never use as I've so many. Well, I'm not a bad liar, though, I assure you, it's not from practice."

Tony jumped up from his chair.

"Oh, Miss Bennett, you are a brick!" he cried, suddenly stooping and kissing her.

"I'll give her a bangle as well, for that!" exclaimed Miss Bennett. "Now, off you go—you're spoiling my morning's read."

"Right-o!—and thank you ever so much," he said, emphasising each word.

The door closed. Miss Bennett put on the wrist-watch, to mitigate the lie of possession, and, picking up her book, began the ascent of the Ziggurat of Ur.

III

Elated by the success of his scheme, Tony Thurlestone arrived whistling at the tennis court. He found Pamela already there, looking very workmanlike in a short kilted skirt and jumper, a white bandeau over her hair. He was a little surprised at her new appearance, she was slim and athletic, with the grace of a Diana in her movements. Yes, she was a creature of surprise and delight. She was even more lovely in morning light than she had been in that alluring hour of sunset.

Having expressed his regret at the failure to find her watch, they began to play. He wondered how much he would have to allow her on each game, but at first he would make no proposal until it transpired just how good or bad he was. He had a demon service which it would be unfair to use against her.

She insisted on tossing for side and service. He won both, deliberately chose to face the sun, which was not troublesome at this hour, and began service. Yes, she could play. She sent him two returns that caught him napping. At love-forty rather relieved that he had not to play with an utter novice, he tried one of his hottest serves. It came back on him, true and swift. He was so surprised, it passed him, and the game went to her.

Pamela's service, following, wrought a swift demolition of his conceit. He took two points out of the game, being quite unsettled by the extraordinary shots she put over, and then lost it. Two down, he decided it was no time for further kindness.

In half an hour he was running about the court as he had never done in Munich where he played and fancied himself. There was no shaking her off. When he stood back, satisfied that his shot was final, from

the most impossible angle the ball came back, in a place where he never expected it. At 2–4 his shirt was wet through and he hadn't yet summed up her weakness. She laughed at his service and banged it back at him in the most contemptuous fashion.

"I say, Miss Kemp, you're a corker!" he gasped, when the game went 3–5 against him. "Wherever did you learn to play? Jove, you've got me cooked!"

She laughed, showing as yet no sign of fatigue.

"Oh, I'll crumple up when you get going!" she said.

Going! Why he'd done nothing else but chase about. She really must not take the set.

But Pamela took it.

Well, woman or no woman, this was going to be a fight—and no mercy, backhand, forehand, long court, short court, volley or net. He tried them all and she replied, cool and confident, with a generalship that found his weak points. But he was on his mettle. After a terrific battle he just held the next set at 7–5.

"Third set for final—long game?" she asked, flushed now.

"Right-o!" he panted. Phew! Three sets of singles under a sun like this. There were no signs of her wilting. He'd have given anything for a drink, but if she could stick it, he would.

When they were five-all the count appeared, accompanied by Mr. Crawley. They were both dressed for tennis. Learning what the score was they stood and watched. The vanity of Anthony Thurlestone, absent from his nature in all but two things, was touched. He could drive a car and he could play tennis. At boxing and rowing he was in a good second class; at

bridge and golf and intellectual conversation, just nowhere. But tennis and driving, yes, those were his two little worlds of eminence. And being his only two, losing one of them hit him somewhat hard. He wanted her to win. She was just magnificent. But he hated losing.

After three deuces, at 9–7 she took game and set. Her victim stood breathless with admiration and exhaustion.

"But you're—you're in the championship class!" he gasped, as Crawley and the count applauded.

"That's subtle self-flattery!" she retorted, adjusting her bandeau.

"Oh—but you're marvellous—simply amazing—isn't she?" he asked the two men. "I say, can't we make up a set? I'm finished for singles. Miss Kemp, I'll take a course of lessons, please!"

"It's not your day, that's all—you can have your revenge to-morrow," said Pamela. She had never played better in her life and was surprised at herself, but she smothered her elation. She had two specialities, typing and tennis. It was good to be able to display one of them before these people. Master Anthony had received a shock, and it amused her.

They made up the set, and were still playing when Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence were seen to occupy the usual seats at the usual hour.

"Miss Kemp plays very well," said Miss Bennett, after she had watched for a short time.

"I wonder really who she is? I must say she dresses in very good taste," replied Lady Prudence, approving the costume. "That kilted skirt suits her admirably."

"With a pair of legs like that any short skirt seems admirable," said Miss Bennett. "Fate, having given

me thick legs, has double-crossed me by giving me them in a short-skirted age."

"Well, you needn't wear them short—not very short."

"I don't, but I'd like to. Look at that girl, I wouldn't object to them well above her knees. Her legs are delicious."

"Janet! You talk like a pagan," said Lady Prudence, shuffling in her chair.

"Not at all. Legs can be delightful, as well as faces. There's nothing improper in saying a girl's got a beautiful face, or a man's handsome. I find legs just as lovely as faces. That's what I like about the Tyrol so much. These leather shorts the men wear set them off magnificently. I get a thrill every time I go out. The young men here have magnificent legs."

"Really, Janet—you make me feel hot. To hear you, anyone would think you were a libertine!" protested Lady Prudence. If only Janet knew how terribly she was expressing her own awful sensations!

"My dear Pru—look at the count! Don't those chamois shorts suit him?" demanded Miss Bennett.

"I should find him just as attractive in anything else."

"Well, I don't. He slumps a little in evening dress. If I'd legs like his I'd devise a new form of evening wear. I think they look an admirable pair," declared Miss Bennett, watching Pamela, who was partnered by the count. "That girl grows on me."

"And on the count apparently. I'll admit she's a nice-mannered little thing," admitted Lady Prudence. "From her dress and bearing I should say she's in a shop—a West-End shop. Perhaps one of Selfridge's assistants. They employ quite a good class of girl."

"Does it matter what we know about her—after all, it's none of our business. If the count likes to find her attractive——"

"The count!" cried Lady Prudence. "You don't imagine the count would ever dream of——"

"I can imagine quite a lot concerning friend Hugo."

"But it would be most unfortunate—most—Janet, I believe you say these things simply to shock me!"

"Perhaps I do, my dear," laughed Miss Bennett, picking up her embroidery. "I wonder why they've stopped playing?"

The game had been checked by the advent of a maid who was speaking to the count.

Would he please go to the countess, who was most sorry to send for him, but something had happened about which she must see him. Such was the message carried by the maid, which had interrupted the game. Seeking their permission, with many apologies and a promise to return in a few minutes, he went into the house.

"I'm not sorry for a rest," declared Thurlestone. The games were 4–1 against them.

"I think a pair like that should be handicapped," said Mr. Crawley. "Really, Miss Kemp, you and the count shouldn't be together! Mr. Thurlestone's being very pleasant to me, but I'm the handicap."

They sat on the bench at the side of the court. The morning was radiant. Not a cloud in the sky, not a trace of mist on the mountains. The snowy crest of the Königsberg shone in the bright noonday.

"Jove—I'd like to be up there!" said Thurlestone. "Miss Kemp—let's do a climb one day."

"I can't climb—I've never been up a mountain," she replied.

"Hurrah—that's something you can't do!"

"It's not a difficult climb—I've been up all these fellows—there's not one of them would test an alpinist," said Crawley. "Karl and I romped over them in our 'teens."

"Karl?" asked Thurlestone.

"Count Edelstein's brother."

"I didn't know the count had a brother."

"Oh, he's dead—fell in the war."

"Was he like the count?" asked Pamela.

"No—not so vivacious, not always so buoyant. He was the poet in the family—full of dreams, and terribly sensitive. Everybody liked him, and some"—Crawley hesitated—"some of us loved him."

He played with his racket as he spoke. There was something in the tone of his speech that checked a further question by Pamela.

"Oh, here's the count," said Thurlestone, jumping up.

Hugo Edelstein came across the court towards them.

Something's happened, thought Pamela at once. His face was solemn and he seemed a little self-conscious.

"I'm so sorry—but will you excuse me from this game? There's a little trouble—we——"

He hesitated a moment, and then, quickly—

"Oh, I may as well tell you—you must know sooner or later. We're besieged."

"Besieged?" echoed Crawley.

"Yes. Besieged! It's quite funny for the twentieth century, isn't it?"

"Exactly what do you mean, Hugo?"

" We're being besieged by the tradespeople. We're to be cut off from all supplies. Did you ever hear anything like it ? "

" Jove !—that's what did happen to people living in castles ! " laughed Thurlestone.

" But seriously, Hugo——" began Crawley.

" I am serious. This morning the baker failed to deliver the bread. Anna rang him up. He was sorry, he couldn't deliver any more. When she wanted to know why, he'd say nothing. Finally, after an absurd scene, he rang off. When Anna rang up the butcher, to give her order, the same thing happened—he couldn't take any more orders for meat. She tried another shop, with the same result."

" But what's the reason ? " asked Pamela.

" There isn't any reason—at least, they won't give any reason. We've paid our bills, so it can't be that ! " he said, with a smile. " I'm going down into the town, to find out what's really the matter."

IV

Almost an hour later they heard Count Edelstein's car come up the drive.

" If you'll excuse me, I'll go and hear the result," said Crawley, as he sat talking with Pamela and Thurlestone.

He found Hugo Edelstein in the office, with the countess.

" Oh, come in, Ian," he cried, as the door opened. " Well—it's war ! "

" War ? "

" Yes. We're to be starved out. Not a shop will serve us. As I guessed, Kneller's behind it."

He told him of his visit, first to the baker's, then to the butcher's. He had tried the only other baker in the town, with the same result. There was a butcher at the far end of the High Street. He was the same as the rest. They had all one story. There was a shortage of food in the town and the surrounding district. The foreign exchange was low, and all the foreigners were flocking into Austria to strip it. There would be nothing left for their own wives and children. So the foreigners must go. They would not be supplied with food at Schloss Edelstein so long as it had any visitors.

In vain he had tried to make them see that, so far from impoverishing the country, the visitors brought wealth into it. No, they were locusts, eating up the country.

" I soon saw it was no use talking—they'd all got the same tale, from the same source. Kneller, of course. He wants to close us down."

" But surely they don't follow Kneller like a lot of sheep ? " asked Crawley.

" They've no choice, Ian—he's such a hold on them," said the countess. " My cook says half the mortgages belong to him. Her brother was turned out of his farm last week. They've had it for five generations. Kneller's put in the son of that Government creature who assessed our estates. That's how he works."

" Anna's right. Kneller's everywhere. I found out about the baker. Old Hilfer's a good fellow, he's done business with my family since a boy. But he's no choice. The chemist told me Kneller has a mortgage on all his property—the old fellow lost everything in War Loans—all his life's savings, and had to mortgage his house and bakery to keep his family alive. That was the chance of vermin like Kneller. They ate into everything. Old Hilfer couldn't look at me

when I went into his shop. You see the game? Kneller's two hotels are not doing well—this place's always full. I'm his only rival here. If he can smash us, he's got a monopoly. The railway's making him desperate. If we get that going, he knows we're on top of him then. This is his last fling."

"But his own visitors, Hugo—is he turning them away to spite us?" asked the countess.

"Of course not—you'll see, they'll get supplied. He's spread the starvation rumour around, got all the idiots to believe it, but he's made himself safe, I know."

"What are we going to do?" asked the countess, pale and anxious.

"Fight him, of course," replied the count. "My dear, it isn't the first time that Schloss Edelstein's weathered a siege!"

He put his arm around her and held her against him, with a cheerfulness more assumed than felt. At any other moment he would have relished this trial, but just now, with the railway straining their resources, it was serious.

"He must be fought and finished," agreed Crawley. "This fellow's intolerable. We'll teach him a lesson. I wish we could see some way of getting at him."

"He's invulnerable—he knows that," said the countess. "He'll do something about the railway yet—he'll never let it start."

"Nonsense, Anna. He can't do anything. He tried to force a strike; that failed. Then he tried alarming the chalet holders. We've quieted them. No. I've no fear of that. We'll open on July the first."

"I think," said Ian Crawley, "the first thing you must do is to take the guests into your confidence. When they know what you are facing they'll

probably put up with some inconveniences quite cheerfully."

"And those who are to come—should we stop them, Ian?" asked the countess.

"No—that's playing Kneller's game. Let them come. If we really can't deal with the situation, then you can ask them to go. But to keep the house full is the first card to play. Kneller wants to empty the house, that's his aim."

There was a tap on the door. The count went and opened it. Mr. Thurlestone and Miss Kemp stood on the threshold.

"Oh, excuse me," said Pamela, "but, please, we would like to hear the news!"

"Come in," said the count, and turning to the countess and Mr. Crawley—"I think they might be the first to enlist in the army!"

Briefly he told them his news.

"If you care to stay, Miss Kemp——" he said, finally.

"Stay? Nothing on earth will drive me out," replied Pamela. "The impertinence of the man! Of course you'll win! This isn't the Middle Ages!"

"I jolly well wish it were," said Thurlestone. "He'd have my bodkin in his gizzard!"

"How are you for food?" asked Crawley.

"We can last the day out for bread and meat. But to-morrow——" answered the countess.

"How many cars have you here?" asked Pamela.

"Cars—oh, mine, Madame Baker's, and Mr. Thurlestone's," replied the count.

"Then why can't they all set out foraging? Where's the nearest town?"

"Kufstein—about forty miles, near the German frontier."

" Then send a car there for all you want immediately. After that, you could send a daily car," suggested Pamela.

" You're right, Miss Kemp," said the count. " That's what we'll do."

" I'll go this afternoon if you like, sir ! " cried Thurlestone. " I know that Kufstein road—I came through there from Munich yesterday."

" I think that disposes of Baron Kneller," said Crawley. " Really, the fellow's childish ! "

" Supposing he stops the car ? " asked the countess.

" Stops the car ! He won't dare—you don't think he's going to put a picket round the schloss ? " cried the count. " Anna, you're getting filmable ! "

" I can't take that man as lightly as you do, Hugo —he intends to ruin us. This is only the beginning," said the countess.

" Gloomy little lady ! " laughed the count, putting his arm around her and kissing her cheek. " Look at all our splendid friends ! Now you go and enlist Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence in the army. I'll proceed to Madame Baker. Perhaps she'll write us a Manifesto."

Pamela was glad to see that affectionate salute of his wife. Perhaps the count was only wayward, after all. He seemed fond of her in his breezy manner.

" What time would you like the car ? " asked Thurlestone.

" Oh, I can go in mine, thanks," said the count.

" No—mine is bigger and faster—if there is to be any trouble, I want to be in it ! "

" Very well—it's very kind of you—three o'clock ? "

" Good," replied Thurlestone. " I say, Miss Kemp, you've not seen Kufstein, have you ? "

"No, but——"

"Well, why not come?"

Pamela hesitated, and looked from the boy to their host. It was, perhaps, for the count to invite her, since this was in the nature of a business trip.

"Oh, yes—do come, Miss Kemp. Kufstein's a lovely old place."

"Thank you—if I'm not in the way," answered Pamela.

"In the way, why——" began the count.

His eyes met young Thurlestone's. The boy looked at him frankly. He had been a fool to accept the offer of that car. He could have gone in his own—just the two of them.

"At three, then," he said, not finishing his sentence.

V

Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence were indignant and bellicose.

"Starve us out! I never heard such nonsense," declared Miss Bennett, when the countess had broken the news.

"If you don't mind some inconvenience for a few days——" began the countess.

"If I knew that baron, and he's not at all the kind of man I'd allow myself to know, judging from the talk in town, I would go straight to him," affirmed Lady Prudence, expanding with indignation like a ruffled turkey, "and tell him he hasn't the slightest conception of an Englishwoman's obstinacy. I'll stay here if we're to be fed by parcel-post or aeroplane!"

"You are all very splendid," said the countess.

"Splendid? We haven't started to be splendid yet, my dear. We'll carry war into the enemy's country,"

declared Miss Bennett. "I don't care a rap about his living with another man's wife—but he mustn't begin interfering with my stomach. When I see him——"

"Janet, dear, I think a dignified silence——" interrupted Lady Prudence.

"Pru, there are moments when a good mouthful—to use a potent Americanism—is worth a ton of silent dignity. For the next month I'm going to be the baron's nightmare."

"Oh, Miss Bennett—I shouldn't like you to upset yourself for our sakes," said the countess, gently.

"My darling countess," replied Miss Bennett, catching hold of her hands—she was only a timid child—"there's been too little excitement in my life, and I'm not going to miss this. I've declared war on the baron. Don't you see the battle-light in my eyes. Do I look upset?"

The countess laughed, her fears dispelled by the cheeriness of this little Englishwoman.

"You are both very kind!" she said, preparing to leave the room.

"We shall stand firm, at whatever cost!" emphasised Lady Prudence, as the countess left.

"Pru, my dear," said Miss Bennett, when the door had closed, "just now you reminded me of your kinsman, the Duke of Wellington—nose and all. The baron has met his Waterloo. Between your dignity and my abuse he'll live to regret this morning's work."

"I think, dear," said Lady Prudence, very quietly, as she heard the luncheon bell, "we might begin to help them by eating a little less."

Miss Bennett gave a shriek, and hugged her friend.

"Pru, there are moments when you are a divine lunatic!" she cried.

I

THEY made the journey to Kufstein and back in safety. It began in comedy and ended in triumph. Precisely at three, Tony Thurlestone was waiting in the courtyard with his big racing car. When Pamela came out both the men were standing by the radiator. Thurlestone rushed round to open the door in the front of the tonneau.

"Would you prefer to sit here or at the back, Miss Kemp?" he asked.

Pamela looked at the car. Thurlestone was driving. If she sat in front with him, then the count would sit alone behind. But if she sat with the count, the driver would be alone. It was a moment for tact.

"I'll sit behind going, and when we've loaded up in Kufstein, I'll come in the front," she said.

They both accepted the situation cheerfully. A bright glance, exchanged when they thought Pamela would not see them, acknowledged the fairness of the arrangement. The count carefully placed a rug across their knees. The car slowly turned out of the courtyard.

It was a wonderful journey, through the valley and along the low ground at the foot of the mountains, past villages and over roaring streams, with vista after vista opening up as they wound in and out of the foothills. The sun shone; bare-legged, flaxen-haired children in the fields waved as they passed. It was a simple road, probably made in lost ages for the transit of cattle and hay from those farms snuggling in the crevices of the mountains or wherever a flat clearing permitted husbandry. So primitive was the road at first, fenced with rough pine planks hewn out with the hatchet, that they were constantly being held

up by little toll-gates, where weather-beaten old women, or swift-footed children, exacted tribute before lifting the pole that lay across the road.

Kufstein, dominated by its castle perched on the summit of a rock that invaded the town like the prow of a leviathan, was reached in less than two hours. The count took them down a small side street, a veritable alley, in which stood a couple of old inns, their mediæval façades gaudily decorated and carved. In a dark little saloon, noisy with peasants and the gusto of a youth singing sentimental love-songs to a cithern, but hospitable withal, the count deposited Pamela and Thurlestone, having extracted the promise of tea from a red-faced little woman, all smiles and curtsies. He left, saying he would return as soon as he had transacted his business.

A pot of tea, three cups, three glasses of rum, rolls, pats of butter and plates of biscuits and picture postcards, appeared as if by magic. The youth bawled, strumming his cithern, voice and music blissfully independent of each other; the husbands, wives, sweethearts and children talked, while the perspiring hostess took orders, gave change and added, for the ninth time, the bill of a Bavarian, fuddled and parsimonious. The air was thick with tobacco smoke, the walls were covered with crude, coarse caricatures. The ceiling was carved and heavily gilded, with models of ships and beer kegs suspended from it.

It was a typical Austrian *weinstube*. From its competitor next door came the sound of music, played by a rustic band accompanying excursionists from a neighbouring village. It was an old-fashioned waltz-tune. All the customers, ignoring the young man who bawled louder and strummed in greater discord,

swayed to the old tune that delighted their simple hearts.

Then into the room, forcing his way amid a scraping of chairs, and beaming in response to a noisy welcome, came an old long-haired man, carrying a harp. Unmistakably he was the Bard. For Pamela, he walked out of the pages of Sir Walter Scott. The Lay of the Last Minstrel began. The young man collapsed before the dignity of age. The company sat open-mouthed. The divinity that touches the poet commanded their reverential awe.

Midway through the recital the count returned. He had arranged everything at the shops. They were to collect their goods in half an hour. Moreover, he had bargained for a car, laden with their telephoned orders, to be despatched to Kitzburg each day. So much for the bad baron.

They made a good tea, and were caught up into the jollity of the little room. As Pamela looked around, from the fresh English face of young Thurlestone, the bronzed head of the count, to the ruddy convivial company gathered in that dark old room, she marvelled again at the strange chance which had brought her life into this scene. In its midst she had a sense of far-awayness, of vision, as if for a moment, in a kind of Faustean trance, she had been permitted to look in through a window on a scene neither of her world nor time. Less than a month ago she sat with the typists of Truslove and Trimmer, drinking tea on the third floor of Oldbury Buildings, Aldgate. Now, sitting between an Austrian count and an English peer's son, she drank tea with Tyrolean peasants and listened to the village minstrel!

The count had rightly anticipated her delight in this native scene. She almost wished he might share the joy of contrast the experience evoked in her. He

looked at her now, happy in her happiness. So good-natured and honest was his smile that she began to wonder whether the contact of his hand with hers, under the motor rug, hadn't been just casual. And if so, whether she hadn't been rather churlish in immediately putting her hands outside the rug? It would have been so pleasant to have let him—but he was a married man, and her English propriety could not possibly acquiesce in his Austrian levity. Again she felt sorry for the countess. He was so very attractive that she must know the count had no long search for temptation.

II

On Sunday night Mr. Anthony Thurlestone announced to Pamela that he simply could not leave Kitzburg in the morning, to resume his studies in Munich.

"It's just too wonderful here!" he said, as they took a last turn on the terrace before dinner.

"That's how I shall feel when I have to go," agreed Pamela.

"Oh, no, you won't—you won't feel as I do, not for the same reason."

"Why?" asked Pamela.

He stopped in his walk and turned so that he faced her.

"Miss Kemp, you——" he broke off, and she saw he was struggling to speak. "Oh, I know you'll resent it, I know you will," he continued, in something like agony. "But I can't go on. I can't! I must tell you, even if it spoils everything. Miss Kemp—I love you! There! Do you hate me?"

He flung out the statement, confused, consumed with

passion and anxiety, so that Pamela, seeing the intensity of spirit in his young face, checked the light-hearted laughter that sprang up. It was a moment for kindness, not mirth. This was vital to him.

"Tony—I can't——"

"Oh, Miss Kemp—that's the first time. I thought you never would call me Tony. Miss Kemp, can't I call you——"

"Tony, you dear boy," interrupted Pamela, struggling with herself now. "You mustn't say these things."

"Oh, Miss Kemp, I simply must tell you, I——"

She took him by the arm and led him along the terrace. They were too near the windows. She felt him tremble as she took him, like a child. They gained the garden at the end.

"Now, Tony," said Pamela, firmly. "You ask me if I hate you. Of course I don't. How could any woman, when someone like you says a thing like that. But it just can't be. I'm years older——"

"Six—that's nothing," he interjected.

"One of my years is more than two of yours. You scarcely know me; I know nothing of you. Our lives are so very different, in experience, tastes, views, position—don't you see how impossible it would be? And if it weren't—I'm sorry, Tony, and I've no wish to hurt you—but I don't love you—I haven't even thought of such a thing."

"I know—I'm a crude fool to blurt it out like that," he said, miserably. "It'd frighten any girl—but you'll let me show you that I do love you? Oh, Pamela, I do—I can't say——"

He tried to take her hands, but she frustrated him.

"Tony—you must please forget this. You think

you're in love. Perhaps you are—but you can't know yet, you're too young. In a few years——"

"I'm not a boy!" he protested.

"Yes—you're a boy," said Pamela, quietly, "with a boy's generosity and susceptibility. They are beautiful things and they touch me, Tony, but I know they're not love. If you insist that you're in love, then our friendship can't go on."

"Oh, that's terrible—friendship! It isn't that. If you knew!" he cried.

"Then—we must say good-bye, Tony."

He looked at her, and she saw she was pressing a sword through his heart. The pain of it shone in his eyes as he stood in silence before her.

"Miss Kemp—I can't say that. Oh, my God, don't ask me that! I shouldn't have spoken. It just burst out of me, now, when I thought of going to-morrow."

"You must go to-morrow," she said, firmly.

His eyes were those of a dog, forbidden to follow. He was silent a moment. Then he spoke, in a voice so quiet she hardly heard him.

"May I come back—some time?" he pleaded.

"Yes—if you will promise to conquer this delusion," said Pamela. Perhaps it was weakness, but she could hurt him no more.

"I promise," he said, simply.

"Thank you, Tony—we'll be friends, then?"

"Yes," he said, but he choked over the word.

"We must go in now."

They walked back along the terrace in silence. They neither of them spoke until they were at the hall door.

"I shall leave early in the morning. And after dinner I may not get an opportunity of speaking to you alone," he said. "So perhaps I'd better say

good-bye now—and—and thank you for your kindness, Miss Kemp."

She took his hand. He kept his eyes averted. Before she could find a word to say, he had wrung her hand and gone.

Pamela stood in the doorway, looking back on the woodland and the garden in the dusk. But she saw nothing except the face of a boy terribly hurt.

XVIII TACTICS

I

Miss Bennett declared war at twelve noon on Monday. Like a good general she had spent the week-end thinking out her plan of campaign. At first the baron appeared invulnerable. He controlled Kitzburg's life. He was the chief landlord in the town, and also its chief estate agent. He owned the best café and the ski-ing fields—a winter strength this—to be scattered by the Edelstein aerial railway. He owned the two hotels, admirable establishments that were never full because, although there was always running hot water in the bedrooms, there was always a leaving cook in the kitchens. He owned the local theatre, and when he had catered for the people's amusement he could also cater for their final performance—the undertaking business was his.

Now, as landlord or mortgagee, the baker, the butcher, the stationer and the greengrocer, to name a few, were his vassals. The anti-Kneller faction in the town, which had fought valiantly, found itself

out-manœuvred. Kneller commanded not only the means of transport and catering, he controlled the town itself with a majority vote on the local council —his minions faithfully registering his will.

Miss Bennett knew all this, and her search for a chink in his armour seemed fruitless until a chance word of gossip between Mrs. Waring and Madame Baker, both of whom had responded splendidly to the defence of Schloss Edelstein, had given her a clue to his vulnerability.

Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett, following their custom, went to the Bauer Café shortly before noon on Monday morning. They had had a little battle of their own previously, and Lady Prudence was still ruffled by it.

"I think it is a scandal, Janet, for us to be seen in that man's café. All the town knows we come from the castle; that the baron is trying to drive out the count's visitors. It will look like treachery."

"I don't care how it looks," declared Miss Bennett. "I want my morning coffee. If I'm sustained by his coffee and cakes—which I am—then surely it's defeating his ends? Moreover, I'm not going to allow anyone to interfere with my mode of life. I shall go as before."

"Then you mustn't expect me to go with you, Janet," replied Lady Prudence, firmly. "I'll never enter his establishment again! And who knows, they may refuse to serve us! We may be boycotted in the town."

"We may—but we must find out. If you don't care to come, Prudence, then you must stay behind."

Miss Bennett marched along the terrace. At the end of it she heard her friend call her.

"Well, I'll come this once—just to see how they

treat us—but I consider it's treachery," said Lady Prudence. "And I shall be most uncomfortable if we encounter the baron."

They did encounter the baron. They had just been served, in the annex to the hotel which was used as a coffee room, when the baron came in. He bowed politely to the two ladies, whom he knew well by sight. Lady Prudence, with a set face, stiffly responded. Miss Bennett rose from her seat and went towards him.

"You are Baron Kneller, I presume?" she asked, putting up her pair of pince-nez which gave her a severe aspect.

"I am, Madame," smiled the baron. He was a man of about thirty-five, handsome in a heavy way, with dark eyes and strong face. He was faultlessly dressed in a sports suit. His bearing, while deferential, was that of a person conscious of power. What he wanted, he took. Miss Bennett, at a glance, saw he was a man for whom women made themselves silly. He well sustained the glamour of a Don Juan, thrown over him by Kitzburg gossip. But it was a Don Juan who would not allow pleasure to interfere with business.

"Then I would like to say," began Miss Bennett, standing firm and lifting her voice, "that I think your attempt to starve us out of Schloss Edelstein is perfectly ridiculous!"

Lady Prudence drew a deep breath and allowed her mouth to open. Was Janet mad? The baron also stared. Then he bowed stiffly.

"I do not understand, Madame," he said.

"Oh, yes, you do! You have stopped the shopkeepers supplying Count Edelstein with goods, hoping it will so inconvenience his visitors that they'll leave. Well, they won't! They'll stay on—without being

inconvenienced, for the count is obtaining supplies elsewhere."

"Madame, you don't imagine I am in any way——" began the baron, recovering from his astonishment, but Miss Bennett was not listening. Her voice rose, so that all the customers in the lounge, the waitress and the concierge at the door, heard every word. She hoped they understood English.

"If you think you can get your hotels full by such disreputable means, you very much misunderstand the temper both of the count and his visitors. I shall make it my constant pleasure to let everybody know your methods and to boycott anything in which you have a finger. If you consider my remarks libellous, I shall be glad of the opportunity of repeating them in the full publicity of a court. Here is my card."

"Madame, your——" began the baron, a flush of controlled anger mantling his cheeks.

"Don't 'Madame' me, sir! I'm a Miss! That is all I have to say to you. This is the last time I shall come here, which I regret, for your coffee is better than your character!"

Miss Bennett marched back to her table.

"Prudence—are you ready to go?" she asked.

Half paralysed by her friend's amazing conduct, Lady Prudence rose nevertheless, leaving her coffee.

"The bill, waitress!" commanded Miss Bennett.

Silence had fallen over the room. A silence in which not a cup clinked. The waitress at the hot-water siphon did not dare to turn the tap. All eyes followed the progress of Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence towards the door. The concierge opened it with a bow that suggested he was ready to have his head chopped off. Baron Kneller with Miss Bennett's card thrust into his hand, stood speech-

less, bound by an inner battle between rage and dignity.

Outside, Lady Prudence regained her speech. But not until they were well away from the Café Bauer did she express her astonishment.

"Janet, I couldn't believe it of you! I never dreamed you intended making a scene like that," she said, "and I very much fear it was libellous. Whatever possessed you?"

"The devil, my dear, when I saw him. I very much fear it was not libellous. But it did exactly what I wanted."

"What has it done? Nothing that I can see. You can't frighten a man like that."

"We shall see—you don't know how well that stage was set. I saw the chance and took it."

"But what chance—wasting words on that man?"

"No—not that man, the other man—and I don't think my words were wasted," said Miss Bennett, a little out of breath. Her heart wasn't as steady as it should be. And she wouldn't let Prudence see she was excited.

"The other man? I don't understand."

"Then, at present, you're like the baron. And, like the baron, you will later," said Miss Bennett.

"Janet, dear, you're quite pale. I'm sure this excitement isn't good for you," exclaimed Lady Prudence, suddenly aware how fatigued her friend appeared. "Let us drive back."

They drove.

II

At three o'clock Miss Bennett informed her friend that she was going down to the Amsee.

"Janet, it's preposterous, you must lie down,"

said Lady Prudence. "Bathing is most injurious to people our age. And you're tired."

"I'm not going to bathe. I like to watch," answered Miss Bennett.

"Personally, I find it rather disgusting," said Lady Prudence. "Those fat Germans, with their dreadful stomachs, and the young men——"

"The young men are splendid. They're like a frieze by Phidias."

"In England they would never be allowed to wear so little. As for those young women——"

"In England they would be as white as roots and look just as nasty. I should want them to wear more," retorted Miss Bennett. "But when you're bronzed you're never naked. You can't say the count wasn't a perfect figure the other day—and Miss Kemp?"

"Miss Kemp was properly costumed. I was glad of it. I thought the count—daring. We expect Hindus to wear loincloths, but——"

"Prudence—your godfather was a prophet!"

"Why?"

"To have had the foresight to call you Prudence," laughed Miss Bennett.

"You are very rude, Janet," said Lady Prudence, resentfully.

"Because I love you, my dear. Now you go and rest and leave your vulgar little friend to sit among the naked heathen."

Lady Prudence saw it was useless. After counselling her to take a wrap, in case the sun went in, and not to stay after half-past four, when it began to lose its power, she went to her room. Something was taking Janet down to the Amsee. What that something was, she had no idea, and she knew it was useless to enquire.

Yes, something was taking little Miss Bennett down to the Amsee. She was tired, but she was at war, and forced marching was the order of the day.

It was a long way to the Amsee, which was hidden in a fold of the valley that lay beyond the town. The lake was fed by a warm spring which kept the water temperate, and the north side was sheltered by a thick pinewood. On the west side was the bathing establishment, consisting of dressing-cabins, a large wooden platform on which the bathers could sun themselves, a high diving-board, and steps for the less competent. It was on this platform, to enjoy the sun and exchange gossip, that Kitzburg assembled in the scanty attire which shocked Lady Prudence.

Yet they appeared innocent enough when Miss Bennett entered the compound. Bronze-limbed young men and women lay in negligent attitudes, chatting and laughing. Rather beautiful, thought Miss Bennett, as she surveyed them. A slender young man, poising on the high dive, probably thought the same about himself. He certainly gave an exhibition, so prolonged that it became problematical whether he really dare dive. But he went, finally, supple as a seal. Cleopatra, who had lain watching her Antony, followed. Sun children, that's what they were, thought Miss Bennett. Why hadn't she been allowed to take off her clothes, at an age when taking clothes off had been possible? Now when she might, she couldn't, not without appearing a frump.

So Miss Bennett, spreading the towel she never used, sat down. The place in which she sat down seemed to have been carelessly chosen. Actually, Miss Bennett had gone to it with great deliberation.

Her march down the valley had not been in vain. He was there.

Miss Bennett, who had learned who he was on previous visits to the lake, had seen him, together with his wife, in the café that morning. It was the sight of him, at the opposite table, which had impelled her to such sudden and vigorous action on the appearance of the baron. Now, as she sat down, she was conscious that the gentleman in the striped bathing costume on her left, and his wife, were aware of her presence. In a few minutes, thought Miss Bennett, they will speak to me.

She was right. They spoke within one minute.

"Quite warm, isn't it?" asked the lady, genially.

Miss Bennett agreed. A most lovely day, and very warm in the sun.

"You'll excuse me, ma'am," said the gentleman in the striped costume, "but we were in the café this morning when you got fresh with the baron. You said something about starving out the people up at the schloss?"

"Quite right," replied Miss Bennett. "It is a most unpleasant story. I couldn't help expressing my disgust."

"What is the trouble?" asked the lady. "You know, I never have liked that man. He thinks too much of himself."

"Sure!" added her husband, "and he's made himself a darned sight too familiar with my daughter."

"I am not surprised," commented Miss Bennett. "He has had enough success to consider himself irresistible."

The sun was warm, the air fresh and pleasant. Around them the mountains stood clear, save where a cloud-shadow travelled across their limestone screes. An ideal afternoon for pleasant gossip. The Russells

liked Miss Bennett. Miss Bennett liked the Russells. This Middle West millionaire had no nonsense about him, and his wife was a shrewd little woman. Miss Bennett complimented them on their daughter, a lovely girl. It was the one she had named Cleopatra, who was still enjoying Antony's company in nilotic bliss. The Russells invited Miss Bennett to have tea with them on the pavilion. At the end of the afternoon they finally offered to motor her back to the castle.

"I wouldn't let you take so much trouble—but you can see the place at the same time. I do hope the countess will be in," said Miss Bennett.

The Russells were indignant about the baron. They agreed with Miss Bennett that it was a wicked thing to try to ruin those poor brave young people at the castle. That man would do anything, it was written on his face.

"I feel most uneasy about Phyllis. She gives him no encouragement, of course, but he is much too affable for a hotel-keeper, even if he is a baron," said Mrs. Russell.

"The Edelsteins are charming. And the food is excellent, despite Baron Kneller," laughed Miss Bennett.

The car entered the courtyard.

"Gee! this is some place," said the millionaire, switching off the engine. Miss Bennett felt proud of the schloss. It looked splendid. She led them in. Happily both the count and countess were there. She presented the Russells, whom she had told about this lovely old home, so much so that they wanted to see it.

With the count and countess for guides, they toured the castle, and then the terrace and gardens.

"But it's enchanting!" cried Mrs. Russell.

" Such a feeling of history everywhere. If only these stones could speak ! "

" I'm afraid we might have cause to blush," laughed the count.

" I just can't tell you what we feel about the way that man's behaving, countess," said Mrs. Russell. " It makes me want to leave at once."

" Why not—you have rooms ? " asked Miss Bennett, turning to the countess.

" Oh, yes—but——"

" James, why shouldn't we come here ? " exclaimed Mrs. Russell.

" Have you three rooms, and a private bath, count ? " asked the practical Mr. Russell.

" Yes—there's the cardinal's suite on the second floor," said Count Hugo.

" What—those lovely rooms we were in just now —you let those ? " cried Mrs. Russell.

" Certainly—if you would like them," answered the countess. " But we've no lift."

" Why, that would be out of the picture, countess. What do you say, James ? " asked Mrs. Russell, eagerly. " And it'll teach that man a lesson."

" It sure will. I guess we'll do it, Milly," he said. " Can we come to-morrow—and what about terms, count ? "

" Now, if you don't mind—I'll leave you to settle things with the count and countess," said Miss Bennett. " It will be delightful having you here. Thank you so much for bringing me back. To-morrow, then ! "

" Thank you, ma'am. I guess we'll be here," replied Mr. Russell, affably. " I'll let the baron know I overheard you," he added, with a twinkle in his eye.

For a moment they regarded each other. Mr.

Russell looked admiringly at the little woman who was bold enough to spike the baron. Miss Bennett looked gratefully at the man who was good enough to give her that pleasure.

Then up to her room she went, and lay down on the sofa. Yes, she was very tired, but she had triumphed. At fifty-four manœuvring was an effort, but when she concentrated on a thing she got it.

Her eyes were closed when the door opened. She looked up wearily and saw Lady Prudence.

"So there you are—and you're tired to death!" said her friend. "I'm glad you motored back. Who was that?"

"You saw them?" asked Miss Bennett.

"Yes, I saw you come into the courtyard from my window, Janet. You make me most anxious, coming home in such a state of collapse. Why will you go down to the lake after lunch!"

"Sit down, Prudence. I'm tired, yes—but very happy. The people who brought me back in their car are Mr. and Mrs. Russell. He's a Middle West millionaire, who's spending a lot of money down at the Bauer Hotel. You've heard Mrs. Waring talking about them, and their daughter?"

"Yes, very rich, and very vulgar, I suppose," exclaimed Lady Prudence.

"You suppose wrongly, my dear—very charming people indeed!"

"But do you know them?"

"I do now. This morning Mr. and Mrs. Russell sat opposite to us in the café, and heard me attack the baron. They were rather astonished."

"I should think they were!" commented Lady Prudence.

"Yes—they were about as astonished, Prudence,

as I had hoped they'd be. Every afternoon they go to the bathing establishment. That's why I went this afternoon, and sat down near them. As I expected, they wanted full details. They got them. To-morrow morning they're leaving the Bauer and taking the best suite here."

"Janet! You don't mean to say you thought that all out!"

"Like a good general, I did, my dear," said Miss Bennett, closing her eyes. "When I saw the Russells and the baron in such perfect juxtaposition, I knew it was the moment for shock tactics. Hence my outburst. I think I've cost the baron at least thirty pounds a week."

Lady Prudence looked at her tired friend with mingled compassion and admiration.

"Janet—I thought there was something behind that outburst this morning. But this amazes me!"

"It does me a little, Prudence. If it weren't vulgar to gloat, I'd eat my words and take coffee at the Bauer to-morrow morning."

Lady Prudence looked around the room, found a travelling rug and threw it across Miss Bennett's legs. Then she stooped and kissed her.

"You're a wonderful creature! I'm going to leave you to rest. There's an hour before the dressing-bell—do have a little sleep!"

"Thank you, dear, I will," said Miss Bennett.

Lady Prudence went out, closing the door softly.

XIX REVELATION

I

THE siege broke down at the end of one week. Acknowledgment of defeat came with the baker, who arrived one morning and asked to see the count. He told a long story of the pressure that had been put upon him. The baron had threatened to cancel all orders for his own hotels, as well as to dismiss his daughter who acted as a chambermaid.

"Has Kneller told you you can supply me?" asked the count.

"No—not exactly. But I don't think he'll object now—we can't go on like this," sighed the baker.

"I can," said the count. "And if I thought any of you had acted on your own choice, I'd never buy a thing in Kitzburg again. But you've let yourself be frightened. Well, I'll think it over."

He dismissed the man. An hour later a small deputation of tradesmen arrived. They regretted they had allowed the baron to intimidate them. No matter what he threatened, they would be glad to supply the count. They received the same answer as the baker.

Apprehension spread through the town. For a week the visitors at Schloss Edelstein had boycotted the shops, and the rich visitors were staying at the schloss. The news of Baron Kneller's attempt to ruin his competitor had spread among all the visitors. They looked askance at him. Some of them left his hotels, some of them wished to go to Schloss Edelstein, where the food was excellent. But it was full and could take no more guests. It was in vain the baron declared he had done nothing to make the shopkeepers act so foolishly; it was in vain that he

complained of malicious, libellous statements, and in particular of the action of an Englishwoman, a Miss Bennett, whom he was suing for damages. His café was half empty. The British formed a solid phalanx, and the Americans lined up with them. Breathing lawsuits, the baron had gone off to Vienna.

Miss Bennett was in no way dismayed. Her work was done. The whole town regarded her with a mixture of awe and admiration. The account of that first open battle in the café had spread along the valley and up the mountains to the highest chalets.

The news that the baron had gone to Vienna to begin proceedings against Miss Bennett filled her with lively anticipation.

"I fear we shall hear no more of that. You'll see the baron home again in a short time," she prophesied. "When he comes back, he'll try to carry on as if nothing had happened."

She was right. He came back within four days, and was notably affable to all whom he met.

II

But Miss Bennett in destroying the baron had destroyed something else—Pamela's happiness. She, of course, knew nothing of this; Pamela, too, was astonished to find herself affected. It was a self-revelation that left her bewildered.

Phyllis Russell, from the first moment she saw Count Hugo, had made him her property. She flirted outrageously with him, she drove him through the town in their big car, she contrived to be his partner in tennis sets, she chaffed and chatted with him at the dinner table. She made no secret of the fact that she found his company a pleasure.

"I think the conduct of that girl's outrageous!" said Lady Prudence one evening. "She won't realise that the count's in no way interested."

"I haven't yet noticed any sign of boredom from the count," replied Miss Bennett. "But then, he makes himself pleasant to everyone."

"And the one person in particular to whom he shows attention gives him no encouragement whatsoever!" said Mrs. Waring.

Miss Bennett, embroidering, looked up from her frame.

"Who's that?" she asked.

"Miss Kemp. You must have noticed. The count has eyes for no one else. She snubs him mercilessly," answered Mrs. Waring.

"Miss Kemp has risen very much in my estimation. She is showing a proper sense of her position," said Lady Prudence. "But I am sorry you should think the count too attentive. I am sure it is only courtesy. That's what Miss Russell fails to understand. But young girls are what their mothers allow them to be."

"Oh, no, they're not! Not these days, Prudence. Parents are what their children allow them to be!" cried Miss Bennett.

The drawing-room door opened and a young man entered.

Lady Prudence and Miss Bennett stared in amazement.

"Tony!" exclaimed Lady Prudence, rising. "What are you doing here?"

"Hello, auntie! Good evening, Miss Bennett," he said, brightly, advancing towards them. He kissed Lady Prudence on the cheek.

"I just thought I'd run over for the week-end!" he said.

"You darling boy!" cried Lady Prudence, kissing him. "But I don't know whether there's room. Have you seen the countess?"

"No—I've only this second arrived—Watson is outside with the car. I say, surely they can find me a bed—is the place so full?"

"I'll go and find the countess, dear," said Lady Prudence.

She went out. Miss Bennett continued to embroider. Mrs. Waring had found a book and had gone to her favourite corner. But for them the long drawing-room was empty.

"Where are they all?" asked the boy, looking around.

"Miss Kemp has gone to the cinema, I believe," replied Miss Bennett, carefully sticking her needle in the canvas. The flight of the birds across that heavily embroidered ground was almost finished.

He said nothing to her reply, but looking up at him she found him smiling.

"Well, Tony?"

"That's why I'm here," he said, simply. "I've been in hell for a whole week. Miss Bennett—can't I talk to you somewhere—somewhere private?"

Miss Bennett laid aside her frame, gathered scissors and thread together, placing them in her work-box, and said quietly—

"Sit down, Tony. Your aunt'll be here in a minute. I'm not the one you must talk with."

"No—I know that. I've no right to trouble you—but you're so understanding. There's no one else I——"

"Tony, stop a moment," said Miss Bennett, looking at him steadily.

"Yes?" he asked, a little perplexed by her tone.

"There is someone else—there's only one person, in fact, with whom you can discuss this——"

"Pamela—yes, but she's not here, and first I——" he interrupted, eagerly.

"You're wrong, Tony—very wrong. Your aunt is the first person you must speak to."

"My aunt!" he cried, incredulously. "But, Miss Bennett, she's the last person who'll understand!"

"That is all the more reason. I hope you'll say nothing to Miss Kemp before you've discussed it with your aunt," said Miss Bennett, firmly.

"I can't quite see that!" he said, dismayed by her attitude.

"There are many things you cannot see at your age, Tony. That is our only compensation for growing old."

He stood up, hurt. He had expected a friend, an ally, and she was ranking herself with the enemy. He was about to excuse himself when Lady Prudence came in.

"There's just one bed—but Watson'll have to sleep out," she said. "You're in number twenty-one."

"Thanks, aunt. I'll go and tell Watson," he replied. Then, suddenly, as he turned to go—

"Oh, aunt—I'd like to see you later. May I come to your room in half an hour?" he asked.

Lady Prudence looked at him a little surprised.

"Tony—there's something the matter!" she said, apprehensively.

"No—not particularly. I just want to see you, aunt," he replied, with forced calmness.

"Very well—in half an hour."

"Thanks," he said, laconically, and went out quickly.

The moment the door had closed Lady Prudence turned a startled face to her friend.

"Janet—something's happened! What's brought Tony here?" she asked.

"Can't you guess, Prudence?" said Miss Bennett.

"No—nothing disgraceful—at Munich?"

"No, nothing at all disgraceful. Something rather beautiful. Tony's in love with Miss Kemp. He's going to tell you that."

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Lady Prudence, fear changing to annoyance.

"Prudence, my dear, I hope you won't use that word to Tony. This is calf-love, but he doesn't know that, and he's terribly in earnest."

"But it's unthinkable, Janet!"

"To us, yes—but not to him. At twenty-one there's nothing but passion and beauty. And she's terribly beautiful in his eyes. You must be very gentle with him."

Lady Prudence sat down beside her friend. Miss Bennett, seeing her face, was troubled. She put a consoling hand on the other woman's.

"Tony wanted to talk to me—because he was afraid of talking to you. Prudence, let him feel he can speak to you," she said, quietly.

"But I can't approve, Janet. It's—it's quite impossible. If his mother were here, or his guardian, they'd——"

"They would oppose it, I know that. But there are ways of opposing things. I'll say no more than that."

"It will be the most dreadful scene!" sighed Lady Prudence. "He'll hate me for the rest of his life."

Miss Bennett said nothing. There was nothing she could say.

III

Pamela, seated in Kitzburg's small cinema, had gone there because the letterpress, in conjunction with the pictures, helped her to learn German. But this evening she could not concentrate on the story or its descriptive matter. All the afternoon she had played tennis with Count Hugo. He was an enthusiast and enjoyed facing her across the net. So far neither of them had gained a permanent ascendancy. He won one day, she the next. Sometimes Mr. Crawley and Miss Russell made a set. The countess did not care much for the game and never came on the court. She excelled at winter sports and held the ski-ing championship of the district.

"I wish I could be here in the winter," said Pamela to the count, as they sat resting after a fierce game of singles. "I've never seen winter sports."

"They're marvellous! You must come. Spend Christmas here!" he said, gaily, twisting the racket in his hand.

Christmas! She would be in London then. Christmas this year would be terrible. She would sit alone in the flat at Hollyhock Villas. Perhaps not there, unless she continued to pay the rent. No, the future could not be thought of.

"You look quite depressed, Miss Kemp," laughed the count. "Does Christmas depress you? We've a houseful here. Why don't you come?"

It was useless to tell him why, simple as the answer was. Instead, she smiled back at him.

"Yes—I wish I could," she said. "I'd love to see the snow on these mountains, it must be beautiful."

"Anna prefers it to the summer. I think they're

equally good," he said. "But she's a winter celebrity, so that makes a difference! My sister's a terrible pot-hunter!"

Pamela stared at him.

"I thought your sister was dead?"

"Anna?"

"Anna!—isn't Anna your wife?"

The count's smile faded from his face. He stared back at her in amazement.

"My wife?" he repeated.

"Yes—the countess," said Pamela, wondering at his stupidity.

"I haven't got a wife—I've never had a wife!" he exclaimed.

"But—but surely," stammered Pamela, "the countess——"

"If you mean Anna, she's my sister. Miss Kemp, whatever made you think——"

He stopped, the bewilderment on her face killed the mirth that rose within him at her astonishing error.

"I always thought, since you are the count and she is the countess, you were married!" explained Pamela. A flush, born of her preposterous misconception began to spread over her face. How ignorant she had shown herself to be. She wanted the earth to swallow her up.

"Oh, that's natural enough!" exclaimed the count, anxious to allay her confusion. "You see, here in Austria, unlike your country, the children take the title by courtesy. That's why there's so many of us about," he said, smiling. "I believe you make rather a joke about it!"

"Oh, no!" said Pamela, quickly.

"Well, I'm glad I'm not married!" he laughed.

Pamela laughed too. But she felt almost dizzy.

It explained so much that had worried her. It made everything so very different.

Yes, very different, thought Pamela, as she sat looking at the film with unseeing eyes. It wasn't wrong of her any longer to be in love with him, to find his laughter delightful, his eyes attractive, the whole life and movement of him something that aroused in her the deepest pleasure. She was no longer troubled by an uneasy conscience. . His little attentions, his obvious pleasure in her company, implied no disloyalty to another woman. That had troubled Pamela terribly. It had been wicked of her to give him the slightest encouragement, and she had had to fight that wickedness desperately. That girl, Phyllis Russell, with her open flirtation, had not seemed handicapped by any moral scruples. She had been disgusted with the girl, and a little disgusted with the count for tolerating her attentions. A married man had no right to allow women to flirt with him so openly. A married man ! What a preposterous trick Fate had played on her ! No, it was her own ignorance, not Fate.

Well, where was she now ? Just nowhere it seemed. She had given the count no encouragement whatever. She had snubbed him, in fact, and after repeated repulses he had avoided her company, despairing of her.

What conceit ! By what right could she imagine the count ever desired anything but a light-hearted companionship ? He liked the company of women, and they found him attractive. Men like the count never lacked feminine friends. And when he married, he would marry a girl of his own class, or——

It was really necessary for him to marry money. A sudden thought stabbed her. That Russell girl

had money, lots of it. Mr. Russell was a millionaire, with enormous interests in American public utility works. Mrs. Waring said Phyllis Russell would be the richest bride in the State of Missouri. Millions. It was quite a fashion for American heiresses to marry with the nobility of Europe. Pamela couldn't blame them. The young men were often attractive as well as titled. They had a historic background, they were polished, with the entrée of a distinguished stratum of society that had its roots in history. Count Hugo could offer all this, apart from himself. The Russell millions would renew the splendour of his fine old family, renew this schloss, degraded to a superior boarding-house.

If Phyllis Russell had the mind, all the cards were in her hands.

Pamela tried to look at the picture. A man in a car was rushing down a broad American street. The sunshine in the setting lightened the hall temporarily. She could see, for the first time since entering, the people sitting around her, young Tyroleans mostly. One young couple, three rows ahead, were not looking at the picture. The increased light discovered them. The girl's head lay on his shoulder as he smiled down at her. Probably he had just——

Pamela sat up in her seat, her heart beating wildly. There was no mistaking that blond head and clear profile. It was Count Hugo, with the Russell girl!

And why not, Pamela asked herself, sick at heart. They had every right to be there.

The hall grew darker again. Something in the picture had made the audience laugh, but she no longer looked at the screen. She sat alone, while three rows away was the one person she had rather sit with than anyone else in the world.

It was no use staying on. Now she knew they were there, it was impossible to look at the picture or try to learn German. To the annoyance of the people in her row, she pushed her way out. The cool night air revived her. This thing must not spoil her holiday. Half of this misery was jealousy, due to seeing that girl with her head on his shoulder. Perhaps he was only amused.

"It is nothing to do with you whether he is amused or not. You're not in his world," said Pamela to herself. "Cut out this love business or you'll wreck your holiday. There's to be no sobbing in this Spring Song."

She struck out briskly along the High Street, through the old archway, out to the dark road leading to the castle. The irony of life! A youth, a delightful English youth, had offered her his love and she had rejected it. He had everything to offer, security, position, ardour, and she had declined them all because she could give nothing in return. Thousands of women would have envied her, but it meant nothing at all. There was only one man could offer her what she wanted, the man she had snubbed in her silly ignorance. If Anthony had been Hugo! If—if—if.

Life was composed of hard substitutes for that magic word.

XX FATE

I

MEANWHILE, Lady Prudence, driven almost to tearful entreaty, fought the mad obsession of her nephew.

"If it were a question of your being in love, it

would be impossible. But this is only a ridiculous infatuation," she said, as he marched up and down the room before her.

"I shall not argue the point—I love her, aunt. There is no more to be said," he retorted, flushed and unhappy.

"There is much more to be said. If you persist in this madness, I shall telegraph to Ivor and your mother. The disgrace of it!"

"Disgrace?"

The lad turned at the word, stirred with indignation. He stopped in his walk and stood before the chair in which his aunt sat.

"I should feel honoured if Miss Kemp accepted me!" he said.

"Melodramatic nonsense, Anthony. Miss Kemp would accept you if you were a legless hunchback!"

"Aunt—you'll make me lose my temper soon. You shan't say such things—how dare you?" he cried, passionately.

"Who is the girl? How long have you known her? What is her position? Where has she come from? Don't you see how ridiculous you are? She might be an absolute adventuress. We know nothing about her—nothing!" emphasised Lady Prudence. "Really, Tony!"

She shrugged her shoulders, unable to express her feelings any further.

"If Miss Kemp were an adventuress," said the youth, slowly, and looking steadily at his aunt, "as you have the indecency to suggest, she would have accepted me when I told her I loved her last week. But she sent me away."

"You told her that?" asked Lady Prudence, incredulous.

"Yes—I told her that. Well, does she sound like an adventuress?"

"No," agreed Lady Prudence. "She sounds like a most sensible young woman. She has risen in my estimation."

"Thank you!"

"There is no need to be sarcastic, Tony. This is not a pleasant scene for me."

"I beg your pardon, aunt," he said, quietly. "I see there is no more to be said."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Lady Prudence, scarcely breathing. There was a purpose about him that frightened her. He had grown into a man in these last few minutes.

"We shall never agree. I'm twenty-one. I have the right to lead my own life. I shall tell Miss Kemp, as soon as I can find her, that I love her more than life itself, and that I shall live only in the hope of winning her love."

Whatever retort framed itself in Lady Prudence's mind, it went unspoken. Something in the boy's grey eyes, his grim face, touched her with pity for his blindness. That was the awful thing about youth. It could be so wrong, and so lovely in its folly.

"I have no power to stop you, Tony," she said, quietly, "if my wish has no weight. I must, of course, communicate with your Uncle Ivor, and your mother."

"I understand that, aunt. You've no responsibility in the matter now," he answered. "And thank you for seeing me."

He hesitated, turned towards the door, and waited a moment, as if expecting her to say something. But she sat, silent and rigid, in her chair.

"Good night, aunt," he said, gently. "I'll see you in the morning."

She made no response. She did not even look at him. Like a dismissed schoolboy, he closed the door behind him.

For a long moment he stood there, with nervous fingers crumpling a handkerchief with which he had wiped his brow. Then, his chin defiantly thrust upwards, he marched down the landing. He must see Miss Kemp the moment she came in. She must understand he could not go on without her. He would wait years and years, if need be, but he would win. A love like his must triumph, or there was no beauty in life, no God in Heaven.

Miss Bennett had said she had gone to the cinema. It was now ten o'clock, and she would be returning soon. He decided to go down the road in the direction of the town. He could not miss her then.

II

Pamela walking briskly along, hoping by physical exertion to dispel the depression from too much thinking upon the perversity of things, was startled to hear someone out of the night call her name. She turned in the direction of the voice, and saw a man's indistinct figure.

"It's I, Miss Kemp—Tony Thurlestone!" said the voice.

He had turned back, for she had swung past him.

"Mr. Thurlestone! Whatever are you doing here?' she cried, in surprise.

"I motored over this evening—for the week-end. You didn't expect me so soon again, did you?"

"Why no—but how nice!" said Pamela. At this moment she was particularly glad of his company.

"May I walk back with you?" he asked, a little nervously.

"Do! Where were you going?" answered Pamela.

"Oh, nowhere in particular—in fact, I heard you were at the cinema, and I thought I might meet you coming back."

She said nothing, and they walked on in silence for a time. Then Pamela began to ask him about his week in Munich, what he had done and seen. He answered her, but he was not as talkative, as spontaneous, as usual. When they arrived at the schloss and were about to enter, he paused on the threshold.

"I say—can't we walk on the terrace a little?—it's not late," he asked.

"I'd like to," she agreed.

They gained the terrace, with its view of the town's lights in the valley. She began to tell him about the end of the siege, and Miss Bennett's amazing tactics when, suddenly, as if he had not heard her, he cut in across her words—

"Miss Kemp—do you know why I'm here?"

"To visit your aunt, I suppose," she answered.

He stood still, and with a quick action of his arms made her face him.

"No—it isn't. I promised you something, and I can't keep my promise," he said, quickly. "Pamela, I've been in hell for a week. I haven't slept, I haven't done anything but think of you. I must tell you, you must listen to me!"

"Well?"

She knew now what had brought him. The whole story was in his eyes, his nervous, desperate manner of speech.

"Pamela! I love you! Oh, I can't put it into words. You don't know what you mean to me!

Pamela, you will let me love you ? I don't ask anything in return—not yet, not until you know me better. I can make you love me. I must ! I won't live without you ! This isn't a silly boy talking. It isn't mere infatuation. It's everything that means life to me ! "

" But, Tony——"

He imprisoned her hands in his own. She felt him tremble in his earnestness as he pleaded with her.

" Pamela—don't, don't send me away without some hope," he cried, in desperation. " Let me see you—often, until you know me, until you can begin to like me. I'll be patient, I can wait, years if you like ! "

The note of appeal in his voice frightened her. When a boy offered his young love like this, it was hard to deny him. It was harder still just now, when she felt that everything had passed her, when the knowledge of her future, so soon to close upon her, loomed bleaker. Would it be dishonest to give him something just a little less than what he sought ? He had so much to offer her, that gratitude might easily simulate love.

" Pamela ? " he breathed, tortured by her silence.

There were his relations. They would oppose her desperately. She would fail in some things, for she had no experience of his world, and it would hurt him. Love was terribly vulnerable in the little trials. He would be loyal, but one could ask too much of loyalty. If he had not so much to offer her, if she had not so much she needed, if he had nothing save himself, would it be enough for her ? No, it would not. She knew that. Then it would be treachery to take his love for something other than its own self. Why was she bargaining with her weakness ? The answer

was clear in her heart. She had nothing to give this boy.

"Anthony—I can't give you any hope. Forgive me," she said, in a voice that didn't sound her own.

"Try!" he whispered, his face pale with anxiety.

"It's useless, Tony. You must accept that," she said.

"I can't! I won't!" he cried, fiercely. "Pamela, I can make you love me——"

"That isn't possible—now," she answered, quietly.

He looked at her wonderingly for a moment. Then, something in the tone of her words struck him. He peered into her face, faint in the moonlight.

"Pamela!" he breathed. "It's not—not someone you——"

Her eyes told him the truth. She felt his grip on her hands loosen. He let them fall from his own.

"I didn't dream of that—I'm sorry," he said, after a long pause.

Pamela laid a hand on his sleeve. It trembled and it told him what she could not trust herself to say. Then her hand fell into his again, and he pressed it, as they looked away at the town, not daring to look at each other.

"Shall we go in?—you'll get cold here," he said, at last.

They walked to the door without a word spoken. In the hall she halted, but he led her on up the stairs to the landing on which her room was situated. He spoke then.

"Good night, Pamela," he said, huskily.

"Good night, Tony."

Her voice faltered, the break in it almost unmanned him. Suddenly he bent and pressed her hands to his lips. His boy's dark head bent thus, gave her an

impulse to press it against her breast, but she fought it. The next moment he had released her and had gone, wordless.

He mounted the stairs, entered his room and rang the bell. When, after some time, a maid, coming up from the kitchen, tapped on the door of room twenty-one and was bidden to enter, she was astonished to see the guest who had arrived two hours earlier packing his bag.

"Will you please tell Watson, my servant, I shall want the car in ten minutes—to return to Munich," he said.

When the door had closed he glanced at his watch. It was nearly eleven. They would be back in Munich for breakfast.

He sat down at the writing-table. He ought to see his aunt, but she would want to know everything, and beg him to stay the night. He couldn't endure another minute in this house. He wrote her a brief note. This done, he glanced around the room to see if he had left anything. And then suddenly, the dam breaking, he flung himself on the bed, his young body shaken with sobbing, so that he seemed only a child abandoned to grief.

The flood spent itself. He got up, a little fearful that Watson might be coming up for his bag. He put on a coat and hat, picked up the letter and the portmanteau, and left the room. Going down, he passed the dark landing where a rim of light shone under her door, but he went on, until the hall, with its stone piers and antlers, was reached. He gave the maid the letter for Lady Prudence, tipped her and said good night.

Watson was waiting beside the car, whose head-lamps tunnelled the drive with a white circle of light.

"Sorry to turn you out, Watson," he said, "but I have to get back at once."

"Very good, sir—will you drive, sir?"

"Yes—you can take a nap."

The engine started up, the car trembled, the shaft of light swept the drive, the gates, the long trees of the pine grove. Out on the road, as if breathing deeply of the invigorating air, the car leapt forward. It lurched, but the hands on the wheel kept it to the road.

Faster they went, the head-lights falling upon shuttered houses, empty streets, and again on the long still road rising and dipping to mountain pass and valley. They swept over bridges, where the torrent roared in the night, but louder roared the engine under the will of its driver. Twice Watson smothered a cry and started up in the imminence of death. It was a mad speed on any road, on roads like these it was flying in the face of Fate.

But when the face of Fate was so ugly, what mattered if oblivion blotted it out? Settling deeper in his seat, the driver made the speedometer on the illuminated dash-board leap to eighty. The night roared past.

XXI STORM

I

PAMELA was keeping a diary for the first time. Diaries were only reasonable if you were a very busy or a very important person. Hitherto her life had been spaced by Friday evenings, when she received her

salary at Truslove and Trimmer's. It marked the end of the week, for Saturday morning was a kind of round-up before the freedom of the week-end. Now she had much to enter. Every day had produced an event. In less than three weeks there had been no less than five momentous events. The strange man she had met under the arch, Anthony Thurlestone's declaration of love, the journey to Salzburg with Madame Baker, the amazing revelation concerning the countess, and the return and rejection of poor Anthony. All within three weeks!

And now some little figures in her diary told her that she was half-way through her Spring in the Tyrol. Her money would last six weeks. According to schedule, she had half her money left. The last three weeks of this miraculous life were now beginning. Every day must be lived to the full.

She was late this morning. Usually she was out by ten o'clock. She had been writing letters to two of her friends, typists like herself, in London. If they heard of any vacant position, would they let her know? She would be back in England by the end of June.

Voices on the terrace below caused Pamela to look out of her window, surely the most glorious window in the whole world, framing this view of mountains, uplands and pine forests. The voices were those of Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence who, with the regularity of a clock, had taken their seats on the terrace, which told Pamela it must be eleven o'clock.

She respected Lady Prudence and she loved Miss Bennett. All the people in the house were charming. Mr. Crawley particularly, so gentle and understanding, and the countess, so kindly and always a little bewildered, and Mrs. Waring, bursting with some tit-bit

about somebody, quite destructive but entirely without malice. Then there was Madame Baker, of whom they all saw so little, such a recluse was she, and her amusing pantomimic secretary, Signor Cavello, with his profound bows, hand-kissing and broken English.

The Russells, too, she liked. Mr. Russell who wanted to know how much everything cost, and was always talking about 'the economic basis,' whatever that meant, and Mrs. Russell, so full of enthusiasm for history, particularly when it was decorative and took the form of ruins, family portraits and rooms where ghosts might walk. Her heart just bled for the Edelsteins. To think the ancestors of the dear count had been ambassadors and cardinals! That dreadful war, but for which Count Hugo might now be a Gentleman of the Bedchamber or Equerry in Waiting at the Court of the Habsburgs! Of course she didn't believe in all that king-business. America had no nonsense of that kind, but it was so picturesque, wasn't it? And here they were quite used to it, and quite lost without it all, poor things.

Yes, Pamela liked Mrs. Russell. She did not dislike Phyllis, who was restless, noisy but exceedingly well-dressed. Her conquest of the count had advanced to a stage where she took him for granted. Three of his friends, all counts, had also been added to her court. It was obvious she liked to move about in a crowd. Had she any serious designs upon Count Hugo? Pamela really did not know. Phyllis Russell was one of those girls who would marry a man because she felt in the mood, and when the mood passed she would divorce him. Nothing lasted. That was her philosophy. Once you knew that, Time had no terrors, because you just snipped his forelock and went on romping. When your Pa was a million-

aire you could romp all over the earth. So said Phyllis.

Pamela dressed with care. This afternoon the count was taking them up the Kitzberg to show them the station on the summit. It had just been completed. The last of the standards was now being fixed on its concrete base. Despite delays, the railway would be working on July 1st. It would be the greatest day of his life, couldn't she possibly stay over for that? Pamela felt pleased by his disappointment when she told him it was impossible. He seemed to want her to see his triumph.

"I believe it's going to be hotter than ever to-day," said the voice of Miss Bennett. "I shall take a mule up the Kitzberg."

"You are very foolish to go—it will be most fatiguing. Climbing's a thing for young people!" answered Lady Prudence. "You should rest."

"I am young, if wanting to go to the top of anything is a sign of youth. I'm going to climb the Königsberg before I leave—Mr. Crawley's offered to take me," said Miss Bennett. "Well, it's time for coffee—are you ready?"

She got up and offered a hand to her reclining friend.

"Janet—how restless you are," complained Lady Prudence. "I don't think I shall go into the town this morning."

"Nonsense—you can't stay away now you've set the fashion."

They had found a new café, and their patronage had put the seal of social success on the place. Lady Prudence denied the fact, but it secretly gave her deep satisfaction.

"You exaggerate terribly," she said, allowing Miss

Bennett to help her to her feet. As a peer's daughter, she had some influence, even in these days of desperate democracy. The morning that had followed the transference of their patronage affirmed her in her belief in the undying power of birth.

She let Miss Bennett lead her away.

Pamela, too, had to go into the town. She was having a pair of shoes made. No one left Kitzburg without walking-brogues made by the local shoemaker. Stepping out into the High Street after her call on the shoemaker, she had not gone many yards before someone called her by name. She turned and saw a man bowing to her. For a few moments she did not recognise him, and then, with an erratically beating heart, she saw who it was. The strange man of the archway was approaching.

He came across the road towards her, dressed in native costume, with grey leather shorts, a green cloth jacket and a felt hat in which a feather was stuck. He was sturdily built, his strong legs clad in the knitted half-hose which left the ankles bare above the shoes. She had never seen him before in daylight, and a coarseness of feature she had not suspected before stripped him of the glamour she had felt by night.

"Good morning, Miss Kemp!" he said, smiling. He had splendid teeth and a powerful head, bull-like on his tremendously broad shoulders. His breadth was emphasised by the line of the coat, shaped in to his slender waist. He looked about thirty-five, and was without a trace of self-consciousness.

"Oh—good morning," replied Pamela, recovering from the shock. He must not see she was perturbed in any way. How had he learned her name?

"I've been wondering if I'd see you again," he

said, pleasantly. "Our last parting was rather—abrupt!"

He laughed as he said the word. Yes, he was handsome in his powerful way. Again she felt the magnetism of his dark eyes examining her. They were standing on the pavement now. He looked at her with a quiet insolence that filled her with annoyance. This man took too much for granted.

"I don't come into the town often," she said. "I'm afraid I must be going. I'm rather late."

"There was *platzmusik* last night," he answered, his eyes never leaving her face. By day her skin and colouring were enchanting. The grey silk jumper showed off her figure in all its svelte perfection. His eyes appraised her carefully.

A man went by on a cycle. He saw Pamela and her companion, whose back was turned to him. He bowed, a little stiffly, as he cycled by. There had been a strained formality in their relations this past week. Neither was behaving naturally in the presence of the other. The count's bow as he rode by just now was quite unlike his former breezy salutes. That Russell girl had wrought a difference.

"Yes—I looked for you last night," said her companion. "I had something to give you."

At once Pamela knew what it was.

"You have my watch," she said, quickly. "Why didn't you send it to me?"

"I thought it better to give it to you personally. If you'll come back to my hotel, I'll get it," he said, quietly.

Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence, passing at that moment, saw Pamela talking with a man. A smile on Miss Bennett's face, as she acknowledged Pamela, suddenly died. Lady Prudence stared fixedly ahead.

"What do you mean?" asked Pamela, fiercely. Something in the tone of his voice, its soft confidence, left no doubt in her mind.

He made no reply to her question, but smiled confidently at her, his eyes mocking her with their abashless inquisition.

Without a word, but with a look of withering scorn that told him more than anything she might have said, Pamela left him, walking quickly in the direction taken by Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence.

Quelling the panic rising within her, she followed them into the café and, white-faced and trembling, seated herself at their table.

"My dear Miss Kemp—whatever's the matter?" cried Miss Bennett, alarmed by the girl's white face.

Lady Prudence stared coldly, with disapproving eyes.

"Oh—nothing, Miss Bennett—I——" began Pamela, but she could find no words to cover her confusion.

"I feel compelled to say, Miss Kemp, that we are surprised and distressed!" said Lady Prudence, looking down at her jewelled hands, each word delivered with a staccato emphasis.

"Prudence, dear——" cried Miss Bennett, reprovingly.

"I must say what I feel, Janet," replied Lady Prudence, not to be silenced. "After all that has happened, I do not understand anyone making herself pleasant to Baron Kneller—anyone from the schloss, particularly!"

For a few moments Pamela fought something within her she had never encountered before. It must have been an attack of faintness. She never fainted, and was unsympathetic towards women

who did. Finally, with a supreme effort, she stood up.

"I—I——" she began, but with a quick movement Miss Bennett had risen. Placing her arm around her she gently compelled Pamela to sit down again. She cast an angry look at Lady Prudence.

"You must excuse my friend," she said to Pamela, quietly. "I'm going to order you a tot of rum with your coffee. Now don't say a word—rest there."

Miss Bennett went over to the coffee counter, gave her order and came back. Sitting down beside Pamela, she took her cold hand between her own and rubbed it.

Had Lady Prudence dared to look up from her paper at that moment, she would have joined Lot's wife.

II

Shortly before lunch a change came over the day. The sun was dimmed in light misty clouds that had, somehow, come out of an empty sky. A heavy silence grew over the valley, so that the strokes of a wood-cutter up on the mountainside fell sharply on the ear. The bird-song had died. The garden seemed to be listening acutely.

"There's a storm coming," said Mr. Crawley, when he saw clouds obscuring the head of the Königsberg. "It'll be here in an hour."

"It's been oppressive all the morning," added Miss Bennett as she walked with him, awaiting the luncheon bell. "We need something to clear the air."

Mr. Crawley regarded his companion. He had known her since he was a boy. It was he who had introduced her to the Edelsteins. He thought she was the wisest little woman he had ever met. If

ever he were in a tight corner he would go to her. Once, in a great crisis of his life, she had saved him by her unique combination of sense and courage. That was eight years ago.

"What's behind that remark?" he asked, after a short pause.

"Impatience with the stupidity of the human race."

"Any members of it in particular?"

"Nearly all of us," replied Miss Bennett, with acerbity. "And in particular, since you ask me, Prudence, Miss Kemp and Count Hugo."

"What have they done to make the day oppressive?" laughed Crawley.

"Prudence we needn't bother about. For her, life begins with Good Birth and ends in Nice Behaviour. She's a dear, but a very heavy dear. This morning she surprised me out of my skin, she forgot her nice behaviour. She was abominably rude to Miss Kemp."

"Why?"

"We found the girl having a conversation with that unspeakable baron. Nothing shocks me, after taking Pleasure Cruises and living on liners, so I swallowed Miss Kemp's entente with the enemy. I'm sure the explanation's reasonable. That girl has the right stuff in her. Next, the count is allowing that Russell jazz-bag to make him her lap-dog. As a scalp-collector she's probably no equal north of the Mason-Dixon line. But there are enough blond headpieces in this valley without her ignoring priority claims."

"Priority claims—what do you mean?" asked Crawley.

"Count Hugo and Miss Kemp were getting on nicely until this Missouri mastodon showed her tusks!"

"Oh! I had no idea——" began Crawley.

"Neither had they," interrupted Miss Bennett. "They were slipping to their fate without knowing it. Now they're abominably polite to each other. It's time we had a storm. Listen, isn't that thunder?"

It was thunder, faint, little more than a delayed murmur. The Königsberg had been blotted out. The sky up the pass was steely blue. A gust of wind suddenly struck the garden.

"There'll be no trip up the Kitzberg this afternoon," said Miss Bennett, as they entered the house. "We're lucky it's come now."

III

At two o'clock the storm broke, with a noise and ferocity that astonished Pamela. The sunny landscape of the morning was now rain-lashed and invisible. The thunder, like a battery of guns, cracked and boomed; the lightning, unlike any lightning she had seen before, was horizontal and vertical, knotted and ribboned, bursting with red and pink festoons, with hearts of explosive fire. From the window of her room Pamela watched the storm, terrified and fascinated. It raged for an hour and then went down the valley. Pamela thought she heard the garden below sigh with exhaustion as the paroxysm passed. The torrent lifted its voice again. The day came back to a darkened world. A peak of the Kitzberg broke through the wind-torn stormwrack. The quenched sun cast its enfeebled smile on a dark forest.

When the tea-bell rang, the garden was steeped in warm sunshine and a thousand raindrops glittered on flower and tree.

Contrary to custom, Signor Cavello appeared in the drawing-room.

"I am verra mucha distressed. Madame Baker ees ina de storm. How shall she 'ave done, I wonder?"

"Oh, you needn't worry, Mr. Cavello, she'll have found shelter somewhere," said Mrs. Waring. "Is she alone?"

"Ah, happeely notta alone. No—she has gone in ze car for ze trip to Kaprun, for lunch. Madame was so happy. Zis morning she sent away ze new book zat she 'ave made—a great book! So she taka small holiday, she worka verra hard, too too hard, I zink!"

"It must be wonderful to have a gift like that," cried Mrs. Russell. "The creative art, that is divine! It makes men like gods."

"It often makes them most disagreeable," observed Miss Bennett.

"And not very particular about their personal appearance at times," added Lady Prudence. "I once had Mr.—no, I won't tell you his name, but he's a famous poet—staying with me. When he'd gone, my maids showed me the towels. I'm sure he'd rubbed his boots with them. They were indescribable!"

"I think that shows he was particular, ma'am," said Mr. Russell. "The trouble with most of these people is they've no economic basis."

Count Hugo entered and came up to them.

"Oh, Signor Cavello—Madame Baker's chauffeur is on the telephone. He's very upset. It seems he's waited nearly four hours for Madame and she has not returned."

"Returned—where?" asked the startled Italian, jumping up.

" She got the chauffeur to carry her lunch-basket some distance from the road, up a ravine, and told him to wait for her in the car. When the storm came on and she didn't come, he went to this place and found her gone. Won't you come down and speak to him ? "

" But I do not speaka German ! " cried Cavello, his eyes wide open with alarm.

" Oh, I'll talk with him—but you'd better come. He wants to know what he's to do."

" Ah, I zank you. I come ! How I am agitated ! " He hurried out after the count.

" If Madame Baker's been out in this storm——" began Mrs. Waring.

" Why must she be so eccentric ? Why couldn't she lunch at an inn, properly ? " asked Lady Prudence.

" Genius in this case seems to be a capacity for getting wet," said Miss Bennett.

" I suppose there is, or has been, a Mr. Baker ? Or is ' Madame ' a kind of pen-name ? " asked Phyllis Russell.

" The lady is a complete mystery," answered Mrs. Waring.

" Well, I've found her quite interesting, she keeps us guessing," said the countess, who rarely discussed her guests.

" And I've found her extremely kind," added Pamela.

" If her ears aren't burning, wet as she may be, I'm surprised," laughed Miss Bennett. " But what I do wish to know is—has anyone here ever read any of her books ? I never have ! "

They all shook their heads. Mademoiselle Dupont startled them all, by saying in her weak, gentle voice—

"She lent me one. I am reading eet now. Eet is most sad! I weep much."

"Oh, mademoiselle—do tell us the name of it! I just love books that make me cry," asked Mrs. Russell. "What is it all about?"

"Eet is called 'The 'eart Bowed Down' and eet's the story of a beautiful princess who wanted to marry a poet who was vair poor. She was so 'igh-blooded zat——"

"All the princesses I've met have no use for poets. They chase Cotton-kings or Bank Presidents," said Mr. Russell, snipping the end of a cigar.

"James, I'm ashamed of you!" cried Mrs. Russell. "Mademoiselle, do go on, it is most interesting!"

But the story was never revealed. At that moment Cavello entered the room, highly agitated.

"It ees most unhappy—most unhappy! Madame ees nowhere found! She have ze lunch on ze ground, not much minutes away. When ze storm comes, Fritz goes for to bringa her back. And nowhere she ees! He 'as waited two hours. She does not come. What do we do!"

"The sensible thing is to tell your chauffeur to wait at Kaprun. Madame Baker has probably taken shelter from the storm, in a chalet. I expect she'll go to the inn at Kaprun," said Mr. Russell.

"Zat is what ze count tolda him. But how sad! *Povera signora!*"

"You must calm yourself, Signor Cavello. Madame Baker will be back here in an hour or so," said Miss Bennett, soothingly. "I think Fritz should have stayed where he was. They've probably been looking for each other."

At six o'clock the chauffeur telephoned to say that

Madame Baker had not yet come to the inn at Kaprun. Should he wait ?

Yes, ordered the count, who had taken the matter out of the hands of the agitated secretary. He was to ring up at seven o'clock if his mistress had not come.

At seven o'clock Fritz reported Madame Baker still missing. By this time excitement spread through the whole castle. A quarter of an hour later, Count Hugo set off in his car for Kaprun, taking Cavello with him.

It was ten o'clock before any message came through. Then the countess came into the drawing-room with the news that, as Madame Baker had not been found, the count and Signor Cavello would stay all night at the inn.

The slight amusement which Madame Baker's absence had at first created now turned to genuine concern. No one went to bed before midnight, all waiting to hear the news. A little before twelve the count telephoned to say that search parties were being sent out from Kaprun to all the surrounding chalets to enquire for Madame Baker.

A somewhat perturbed household retired to rest. Madame's French maid had to be given a strong dose of *sal volatile*. She avowed her poor mistress had been murdered for her jewellery. Last night she had dreamed of a black bag over the head of a white horse that ran backwards. She was born in Brittany, and her dreams always came true.

XXII SENSATION

I

The fortnight following Madame Baker's disappearance Schloss Edelstein endured a second siege. Within a week the name of the small Tyrolean town was known all over the world. Madame Baker, the famous novelist, had mysteriously disappeared while a guest of the Count and Countess Edelstein. For days and nights the brave peasants had left their labour in the fields and had scoured the high mountains in search of the missing lady. Special correspondents hurried to Kitzburg from Vienna, Paris, Milan, Berlin and Rome. The illustrated papers carried pictures of Kitzburg, of Schloss Edelstein, of the search parties setting out from Kaprun, of Madame Baker, of Madame Baker's secretary, maid, the chauffeur Fritz and the beloved Borzoi.

It transpired that wherever the English language was read Madame Baker had a host of admirers. She had written twenty-two novels, and, only on the day of her disappearance, had despatched to her literary agent her twenty-third work. Madame Baker, said her secretary, in an exclusive interview accorded the special correspondent of *The Tribune*, was terribly exhausted on the completion of her new novel, which she regarded as the best she had written. Seeking tranquillity after her long labour, she had taken the car for a day's trip into the country. At noon, enchanted with the scenery up the Kaprun Valley, she had ordered her chauffeur to halt, instructing him to carry her luncheon-basket to a place she had selected in a ravine. The chauffeur was then told to return to the car, an open Rolls-Royce, and get his own lunch.

From that moment Madame Baker had completely disappeared. When the storm broke, the chauffeur, failing to find his mistress, had concluded she had taken refuge in some chalet near by. Signor Cavello, the lifelong friend and secretary of the famous novelist, concluded the special correspondent of *The Tribune*, was reluctant to accept any theory of foul play. Madame Baker wore exceedingly valuable jewellery, but she was a person of extraordinary personal charm and courage. He hoped it would prove a case of lost memory. Meanwhile, the search was being strenuously prosecuted.

During these days of anxiety at Schloss Edelstein, Pamela saw little of Count Hugo. He was continuously going over to Kaprun, the headquarters of the search party. The Government, to assist the search, had moved a company of Alpini of the Special Reserve into the district. The higher ranges of the Moserboden were now being searched, even up to the terminal moraine of the Karlinger Glacier. Ten of the most experienced guides had been enlisted in the search and had begun a survey of the Kitzsteinhorn and the precipices on the south-eastern arête.

But it was not the organisation at Kaprun that wore down the count, anxious as he was to give it all possible help. It was the impudent bombardment of the privacy of the schloss. At all hours of the day, in every part of the grounds, the Press appeared, having taken cover behind rose bushes or balustrades ; the camera clicked, the pencil scribbled, servants were trapped, bribed and interrogated. The visitors, entering and leaving the castle, were buttonholed by polite but tenacious young men.

At the beginning of the second week, or on the Ninth Day of the Search, as the newspapers headed their reports, an insidious rumour began to lift its

head in the Press. It seemed that Madame Baker was not such a famous novelist after all; indeed, she was rather obscure, and her books had never sold. Enquiries at the libraries, where a brisk demand was now being made, elicited the fact that most of her twenty-two works were not in the catalogues. Nor had she ever been a best-seller in America, as had been at first stated. Although an American, America was scarcely aware of her at all. It was then that one newspaper, bolder than the rest, made the audacious suggestion that perhaps Madame Baker was not lost, but hiding in Schloss Edelstein! It was known, from the servants at the castle, that Madame Baker ate in private. She rarely dined with the guests. A significant fact.

From that moment the siege triumphed. The suggestion forced open the door of the schloss. Indignant and powerless to quell this monstrous suspicion, Count Hugo, on the advice of Mr. Crawley, invited the correspondents to search the castle. With magnificent indignation they vindicated the count's honour. They also minutely described the furniture of each room. The portraits of the cardinals and ambassadors gave colour to descriptions of splendour broken by the war, of the pathetic struggle of a great family to gain a livelihood by letting its ancestral suites.

"It brings a lump into my throat, James. I feel we've no right to be living in the cardinal's suite," said Mrs. Russell, putting down her paper.

"Aw—dope!" retorted Mr. Russell. "If a fellow can't live on his ancestors, what's the use of 'em, anyhow? But I'm noticing one thing, those Press fellows aren't having cotton-wool pulled over their eyes. They don't believe that crazy woman's missing. Neither do I!"

"James, you don't suggest Madame Baker's——"

"An adventuress! That's just what I do. Holy smoke, it's plain enough, isn't it? Do you see how that secretary-fellow—or Lord of the Bedchamber, whatever he is—has worked in the new novel? I guess he's got the editors lined up for Madame's latest stillborn child—though not so stillborn this time, judging by the rumpus."

"I believe you've no faith in anybody, James," said Mrs. Russell, disapprovingly. "Where could she hide herself all this time?"

"That's the conundrum. I'll ask her when she comes back," exclaimed Mr. Russell, biting a new cigar. "The count's got her fixed, too. He told Phyllis he thought it a waste of time searching any more."

"But he doesn't mean it in the way you do," said Mrs. Russell.

"That young man's much too clever to let anyone know just what he does mean. Anyhow, it's been fine publicity for his place."

"I believe you suspect him of abetting Madame Baker!" retorted his wife.

Mr. Russell smiled at her through a haze of smoke, and walked across to the window of their private sitting-room, which looked down on the south garden.

"No, I don't. But I suspect him of knowing more than he says," answered Mr. Russell. "He's no fool, he's——"

The sentence went unfinished. Something had arrested the millionaire's attention outside.

"There's one thing I am certain of, concerning that young man. Whether Phyllis intended wasting her time or not, she's wasted it!"

Mrs. Russell, repairing a tear in her jacket—being

an expert needlewoman who had cut out her husband's trousers in past days of buggy carts and corn-on-the-cob, before Main Street had electric traffic signals—looked up sharply at her husband, but she couldn't see his face, since he was staring out of the window.

"Phyllis, I'm sure, has no serious intentions. She finds the count very good company, of course."

"I'm glad of that, for Phyllis's sake. Come here, Amy!"

"Why?"

"Come here!"

Mrs. Russell got up and joined her husband at the window.

"Look!" he said, quietly.

Mrs. Russell looked. She saw two young people seated in the garden, in the shelter of the Judas tree, which, however, gave no aerial protection. The hand of Miss Kemp was in the act of pushing back an unruly lock of Count Hugo's hair.

"Do you remember that was the first thing you did to me when I'd asked you to marry me?" said Mr. Russell.

His wife made no answer for a few moments.

"I think it's only playfulness," she replied, observing.

"You goose!" exclaimed Mr. Russell, drawing his wife from the window. "Look where playfulness led you!"

"I could wish them nothing better, James."

Mr. Russell said nothing, removed his cigar and sedately kissed the tip of his wife's nose. Then he resumed his smoking, while Mrs. Russell resumed her sewing.

II

The millionaire's wife was quite right. It was only playfulness. They were sitting in the sun, and the sun made one light-hearted. Moreover, Pamela had been consoling the count, who was harassed by the Baker affair. She liked him better in these days of trouble—they revealed masculine qualities of shrewdness and self-control, which she had not suspected. The sensation created by the missing woman had sent the young countess to bed with nervous prostration. It was her brother who dealt with the authorities and the Press. Mr. Russell was quite right in his surmise that the count knew more than he would say. He knew one thing that would have given the newspapers a supreme sensation.

On the Second Day of the Search, the secretary and he had found among Madame Baker's many papers definite evidence of a husband's existence. He lived in Columbus, Ohio, according to the bank that sent a quarterly cheque on his instruction. They cabled him, care of the bank, taking great trouble to word the distressing news so as to minimise the shock. On the Fourth Day of the Search they received a cabled reply, which read: "Don't worry. She will come back. Cleveland J. Baker."

"The man's a brute," said the count, showing the cable to Ian Crawley.

"No—he's a philosopher," replied Crawley. "I don't think any cable could surprise Cleveland J. Baker. I see, from her passport, Madame Baker has not been home for twelve years. And the alimony has never faltered."

Nothing of this revelation escaped from the three men concerned. Signor Cavello even increased his lamentations for the "'eart-rending fate of Madame

Baker." But his words, at the end of a fortnight, were no longer noted by a listening band of special correspondents. The band, indeed, grew less. One by one they vanished. In the third week, the local correspondent of an Innsbruck paper was entrusted with the task of keeping the world informed of the progress of the search for the once 'famous,' then 'well-known' and now mere novelist. The murder of a Socialist Deputy in Rome drew all eyes towards Italy. Interest in the fate of Madame Baker was dead.

"We're all beginning to lose hope," said the count, discussing the affair with Pamela on this hot June afternoon. They had arranged tennis doubles with Miss Russell and Mr. Crawley. But Miss Russell asked to be excused, having been called down into the town, and Mr. Crawley pleaded heat. Singles on an afternoon like this, when the sun proved that Spring had given place to Summer, was quite impossible. So the count and Pamela spent the time talking on a seat in the garden. They agreed to play after tea, in the cooler hours.

"I feel a dreadful beast about it all, Miss Kemp," he said. "That poor woman may have been preposterous—but no one could wish her an end like this. You see, after the first shock of her disappearance, I began to think, with the newspapers, that it was a publicity trick."

"But what good would it do her?" asked Pamela.

"Well, it has created a demand for her books. Cavello says there's a pile of telegrams from editors and publishers in America and England asking for her work. There's little to choose between notoriety and fame these days."

"Don't be cynical," said Pamela. "And I've not

lost hope about Madame Baker. I only hope she'll be found, safe and well, before I leave."

"Leave? But you're not going yet?" cried the count in surprise.

"In four days—my time's up," said Pamela. "I feel like a person sentenced to death!"

"But why should you go—is it necessary?"

"Necessity is the only force that could move me from here. It's been heaven!" cried Pamela.

She clasped her hands and looked across the valley. "I never believed life could be as beautiful as this! Look at it!"

They looked over the valley and mountains.

"I suppose it is beautiful," he said. "Only one takes it for granted. I'm much more interested in people than things. You are going back to London?"

"Yes, London."

"I'd like to go to London," he said, wistfully. "It must be magnificent."

"You've never been?"

"No. But all the people I've liked come from London. Mr. Crawley, Miss Bennett—oh, lots of people. So I know I'd love it. I'd like to know how you live in London, what you do, where you go. My brother Karl used to talk about it. He often went and stayed with the Crawleys. So I feel an attraction. But, Miss Kemp, you mustn't let London have you back yet!"

She smiled at his ingenuous manner. It was as if he really wished her to stay.

"I shall have been here six weeks—the longest holiday I've ever had," she said. "And I've had such a marvellous time, and seen and learnt such a lot!"

"What have you learnt?" he asked, raising his head quickly, so that his hair fell over his brow. His

clear eyes smiled at her, and the impulsive charm of him hurt her.

"Oh, a few words of German," said Pamela, "and that the countess isn't your wife, which makes you much less horrible than I feared!"

"Miss Kemp, you didn't think I was horrible—not really?"

His question had such a note of earnestness in it that Pamela had to laugh at him. She had to do something else. Her hand lifted the fallen lock of hair out of his eyes. The boldness of the act made her heart beat quicker. It would have beat still faster had she known she was observed.

The count seemed not to notice anything unusual, and leaning closer—

"Not really, Miss Kemp?" he reiterated.

"No, not really," said Pamela, and she broke into laughter to cover astonishment at her own action. Someone approaching made them look up. It was Greta, the maid, with a message. They had rung up from Kaprun and wished to speak to the count at once.

With a word of excuse, he went into the house.

Pamela did not move. She loved this heat of the sun, the silence of the garden, the beauty that was in everything. To leave it, to go back to the greyness, the struggle, the unkindness—courage failed her at the thought. Yet it was the common lot of millions, why should she expect to escape it? And she had had her chance. That boy Anthony Thurlestone, in his infatuation, had offered escape. His love might not have lasted, the illusion of youth might not have endured, but he could not have thrust her back again into the prison-house of hard labour. Had she been too honest with him, too conscientious with herself?

She knew other women who would have had no scruples. Was honesty always the best policy?

Luxury and beauty softened people. They were softening her. Once she would never have questioned the wisdom of honesty. The sooner she was back in London, to the battle of life, the better. In four more days her adventure in fairyland would be over. She might not live happily ever after, but she had had something that could never be taken from her—one perfect Spring whose beauty would never die in her heart. She would recall this old castle, this garden, these mountains, the people she had met, kind Miss Bennett, stiff old Lady Prudence, Mr. Crawley, Count Edelstein—his vivacity, his springy way of walking, his——

He was coming towards her now, hurrying, with the air of joyous excitement that always enveloped him.

"Miss Kemp! News! Madame Baker's been found!" he shouted as he came down the path.

XXIII THE PRICE OF PUBLICITY

I

As Miss Bennett acidly remarked—the truth was stranger than Madame Baker's fiction, if truth it was. On the day of the storm Madame Baker, who was eating her lunch in the spot where she had ordered Fritz to leave the basket, was caught by the sudden downpour and took shelter in a cavern near by. Here she waited for half an hour, and then, the storm showing no signs of abating, she started to go back

to the car. The track she followed proved to be the wrong one, and after considerable wandering, drenched by the downpour, deafened and terrified by the violence of the storm, she sheltered again, in a cleft of the rocks near a waterfall.

From that time on Madame Baker had no recollection of anything. It transpired that about midnight she had knocked up some peasants in their mountain hut on the Kitzsteinhorn, the monarch up the Kaprun Valley.

It was then that the story became more mysterious. "Incredible!" Lady Prudence called it. For two weeks she had lived with a peasant family. She had plenty of money and paid liberally for all they gave her. Their chalet was shut off from all communication with the world, being a summer station, only used when the cattle moved to the higher pastures. Finally, a son, coming down into the valley, heard of the hue and cry for a lady whose description fitted their visitor, who seldom spoke and ignored all questions.

"You can't tell me that you can go and live in a chalet for two weeks and not account for your sudden arrival without baggage! No, boy! I'd like ten minutes with that simple peasant!" said Mr. Russell.

"Complete loss of memory is always a thing I have difficulty in believing," commented Mrs. Waring. "It used to be the fashion once, like appendicitis. I suppose, Mr. Russell, you think with me, that Madame Baker deliberately——"

"Now, Mrs. Waring, don't ask me to say anything libellous!" warned Mr. Russell. "I'm free to think what I like, but not to say it."

"It seems to me you've said it," declared Miss Bennett, "and we're all in complete agreement."

"She should really be exposed. It's scandalous!" cried Lady Prudence.

"Exposure is evidently what she likes," replied Miss Bennett. "Did you see her when she was brought back, Mr. Crawley?"

"Yes, for a moment or two. They lifted her out of the car. The countess had obtained a nurse, who was awaiting her. I expect she'll be invisible again," said Crawley.

"Well, I don't think the count should have her back," observed Lady Prudence.

"I hear she's going to a convalescent home in a few days," said Pamela.

"Asylum would be better," retorted Miss Bennett, quietly, intent on her embroidery frame.

"Gaol!" corrected Lady Prudence.

Mr. Russell laughed, balanced the long ash of his cigar appreciatively, and stood up.

"Ladies—you are getting libellous! I'm going down into the town to hear its version," he said, leaving the room.

Mr. Russell was amazed at the version current in Kitzburg. It exceeded anything they had been able to surmise up at the castle. The hour being half-past nine in the evening, when beer, music and good cheer contributed to the noise in Kitzburg's modest inns, Mr. Russell had no difficulty in sounding public opinion. Over successive flagons of Munich's chief export, to which he added a liberal offering of excellent tobacco for the deep bowls of their metal-capped pipes, Mr. Russell discovered that all Kitzburg had but one opinion. Its unanimity suggested a current against which it was useless to swim. He plied drinks and tobacco, and listened.

At the third inn of his pilgrimage he got the clue

he had been seeking. The name of the baron, as an authority on the affair, slipped out of a mouth of his companion, a giant of six-foot-two, who kept a sports outfitting shop. Yes, it was all a clever trick to get publicity for Schloss Edelstein. Count Hugo knew where the woman was hiding. It had done them both a good turn, he with his hotel-keeping, she with her book-writing. Oh, yes, it had well paid that fellow in the chalet to keep his mouth shut for a fortnight.

Mr. Russell swallowed his indignation, and his beer. The same version met him everywhere. It was useless to contradict it. All the way home he nursed a quiet rage against the baron. He didn't believe a word of it. Young Edelstein was one of the whitest boys he knew. He would have taken him for a son-in-law with pleasure. But since Phyllis had veered of late, and was now teaching the vice-consul's son English and other things, Mr. Russell denied he was disappointed and bore no resentment against her successor. Miss Kemp was a fine young woman, and deserved everything she won. Good luck to her! As for the baron. He was one of those men you didn't talk to, you just knocked 'em down. The last time he had knocked a man down, for rough handling a horse, it had cost him fifty dollars.

"Gee! I'd called the pleasure cheap at five hundred!" said James Russell to himself. That was how a millionaire could enjoy his money.

II

At the time that Mr. Russell returned to the castle, the nurse in Madame Baker's room was preparing for bed. The patient, pale and languid, on the vast damask-draped throne, had sunk into a light slumber. The doctor, diagnosing the case as one of extreme

brain-fag, had counselled as much rest and quiet as possible. In a few days, at most in a week, he hoped, Madame Baker would be normal, as normal as a woman with such a brain—*wunderbar* was the word he used—could expect to be. Sleep was the cure, and happily Madame Baker was sleeping. The nurse, satisfied that her patient had settled for the night, switched off the shaded light and closed the door softly. She, too, was tired. She had left Innsbruck very early that morning in response to the doctor's telegram.

At the end of the landing she met the young English lady with whom she had talked for a few minutes in the garden that afternoon. It had been a struggle, for Fräulein Schmidt's English had been learned while nursing British war-prisoners in Vienna.

"How is the patient to-night?" asked Pamela, on her way to bed. "I hope better?"

"Ya! Veer goot! She ist sleebing vell, tank you!" whispered the fat little nurse. "Gooten night!"

Madame Baker was not asleep. Indeed, she was very much awake. With her head low in the pillow, she listened. The footsteps of the nurse died away down the corridor. That nurse was a nuisance, but it would not be for long. Liberty would come again, with the move to the convalescent home, for which, officially, she would be leaving in the shortest, decent time possible. Meanwhile, this pillow was delightfully soft and the bed reposeful. The one she had slept on in the chalet had been dreadful. That, and the food, had proved more trying than the nerve-racking anxiety.

She raised her head a little and listened. All was quiet. Stretching her hand out, she found the reading

lamp and switched it on. Then, getting out of bed, she moved quickly to the door and turned the key. It was a risk if the nurse returned, but that was improbable. Next, she took a dressing-gown out of the wardrobe, and wrapped herself in it.

She could wait no longer. It had not been possible all yesterday, and again to-day, to get a word in private with René. And she must know what had happened.

The door on the left communicated with his room. Tapping lightly, she opened it. The lamp beside the bed was lit. He lay there reading, but sat up quickly when he saw her.

"*Cara!*" he exclaimed.

"Come into my room, she's gone," cried Madame Baker. "I can't talk to you here."

Closing the door she went back to her bed. She trembled with excitement as she waited. In less than a minute he came in, clad in his crimson dressing-gown.

"*Carissima!*" he cried, taking her hand to kiss it.

"Oh, drop that—what's happened?" she demanded brusquely. "I'm dying for news—what have they said?"

He looked at her, and glanced anxiously round the room.

"The door's locked—well?" she asked.

"It ees too much. It ees too much you have done!" he cried, shrugging his shoulders. "Why do you not quicka come?"

"Quicker? I said ten days or a fortnight—well, what's happened?"

"*Dio mio!* Everything! You shoulda see ze journals! Ah, whata zey say!"

"What do they say—where are the papers? René,

don't stand there like a gibbering monkey! Bring me the papers!" cried Madame Baker.

"Ze sensation! Ze reporters! *Dio mio!* Eet was terrible. Zey ask everysing! Zey looka under ze bed, zey looka in my room, Maria's room."

"What were they doing here? Who let them in?"

"Ze count. Whena zey say you are not gone, he was furious! Zen looka everywhere, he shout. And zey look, zey ask me all sings. I knowa nozzing—nozzing at alla! Eet was terrible," reiterated Cavello.

"Fetch those papers—and letters, where are all the letters?" asked Madame Baker.

Cavello went into his room and reappeared, with a bundle of newspapers under one arm. In his hands he carried the loose tray of a cabin trunk piled up with letters.

"Looka here! Zis ees not all. Ze whol' world writed to you. But ze important ones I 'ave 'ere."

Madame Baker surveyed the tray. Then with trembling fingers she opened the newspapers. Her name in heavy headlines leapt up from the pages. It had been a first-class sensation.

"An' zis—eet was ver' unfortunate. Count Ugo, 'e insisted I wire your 'usband, who reply so," said Cavello, handing to her a cablegram.

"My husband—you boob! Whatever did you——"

Madame Baker did not finish the sentence. "*Don't worry. She will come back. Cleveland J. Baker,*" she read. A laugh escaped her.

"Pig! He's only thinking of his alimony," said Madame Baker. "My agents—have they written?—that's the most important."

Cavello picked up some letters pinned together.

"Eet is as you said. Eet will please you, I sink. You are wonderful, *cara!* But ze courage!"

She ignored his words and rapidly read the letters from her literary agents. They were addressed to her secretary. The last letter made her give a little cry of pleasure.

". . . in the circumstances we immediately closed with the offer of one thousand pounds for the serial rights. We attach the cable from our New York office regarding an offer of ten thousand dollars for the American serial rights, which we have authorised them to accept. The film rights of Madame Baker's novel, *Sawdust and Spangles*, have been bought by International Stars Inc., for twenty thousand dollars. We are now negotiating for a substantial advance on royalties on the new book. Messrs. Player are re-issuing, at once, a complete popular edition of Madame Baker's novels.

" It would be most lamentable if Madame Baker is not alive to enjoy the long-delayed reward of her ability. We anxiously await news of her discovery. Meanwhile we have acted without seeking your confirmation, in view of the fact that . . ."

" Any more cables there from America ? " asked Madame Baker, feverishly.

" Yes," said Cavello, producing another batch of letters. " Your agent, he reports two offers more of ze films for——"

Madame Baker almost snatched the papers out of his hand. She glanced through them rapidly.

" He should have asked ten thousand dollars for *The Woman Called Mary*—it's quite my best," she said. " Well, I guess we'll total somewhere around fifty thousand dollars. Take these papers away, René. I'm terrified lest that nurse should come back."

"Ah, you do not knowa ze talk, alla zey speaka of you," cried Cavello, gathering up the papers. "Zey saya, after some days, you 'ave gonna for ze sensation eet makes!"

"They can say just what they like, my dear René —I've had the headlines for a fortnight. That's been worth fifty thousand dollars, I guess. Nothing succeeds like the Press."

"I thinka we go away soon?" suggested Cavello.

"So do I. You can book rooms at the Villa Medici on Como, and give it out I'm going to a convalescent home at Lausanne. To-morrow, when the nurse goes for a walk, we'll run through these things. Don't try to speak to me to-morrow. For a time I must be vacant. You might bring that Miss Kemp in to look at me in the morning. She'll radiate sympathy all over the house when she's seen me."

Madame Baker lay back on the pillows. She was really very tired with the strain of those past days. She bade Cavello good-night. He was just closing his door when she remembered her own was locked. In response to her request, he unlocked it, and went to his own room.

At eight o'clock in the morning the nurse found the patient still sleeping.

XXIV DAYLIGHT

I

Count Edelstein, with the events of the last three weeks, was feeling exhausted. He was a highly strung fellow, reacting rapidly from the heights of

happiness to the lowest depths of despair, and life recently had been anything but tranquil. There had been the strike of the shopkeepers, over which he had triumphed after much anxiety. Then, almost before he had recovered from that, Madame Baker's adventure had precipitated them all into a blaze of publicity. It had been far worse than the shopkeepers' siege. Even Ian Crawley, steady as a rock in all things, had been overwhelmed by the avalanche that swept down upon them. He fought the special correspondents day and night, he curbed their astonishing imagination and stood up to their cross-fire of questions. He had chased them out of the grounds, and at the most crucial moment, when rumour attacked the honour of the house, he had made the bold, tactical move of throwing open the whole castle to these representatives of the modern Inquisition.

That seemed to have satisfied them. Madame Baker was not hiding in her room, or under the bed, or in the numerous secret passages which, according to one vivid account, made it possible for a whole family to live in the house unobserved.

And now, when the storm had been weathered, this other monstrous accusation was being made and believed. He, Hugo Edelstein, had planned the whole thing as a publicity trick for his hotel. Mr. Russell had encountered the story everywhere the previous evening. This morning, faithful Elise had come up from the dairy with her face burning. She burst into tears as she told the countess what they were saying down in the town. It was wicked! How could people be so evil-minded!

"What can one do, Hugo?" asked the countess, as they sat in their office. She, too, was pale and worn with the trials of the past weeks.

"Nothing, Anna—we'll just have to ignore the

gossip. But that woman must go, as soon as she is able," said her brother.

"I don't believe she's ill. I don't believe she ever lost her memory!"

"Neither do I—but we're forced into playing her game, now. We must appear to believe in her illness. The only bright thing in the whole business is the way our guests have taken it. They might all have left, but they're sticking!"

"Lady Prudence was to have gone on Monday," said the countess. "She told me last night that she'll stay another month to show her disgust of this gossip."

"Splendid! But they're all splendid, Miss Bennett, Mr. Russell, Miss Kemp——"

"Miss Kemp is going on Saturday," said the countess, opening a letter file, "but not because of anything's that happened. I like her very much."

The count slipped off the table on which he had been perched. His sister's back was towards him, and he regarded her bent head for a moment.

"What do you think of Miss Kemp?" he asked, casually, tearing an old leaf off the calendar on the wall. Saturday—three more days.

"Very English," replied the countess, busy.

"Meaning?" he asked.

"It would take a long time to really know her. She gives me an impression of being on guard—but most sincere. Miss Bennett is very fond of her, and I'd accept her opinion over anybody's."

The count stood for a moment, playing with the telephone directory.

Anna was as cautious as he was impulsive. When he soared, she pulled him down to earth. Everything about her had a practical basis. It went right through her life. Those books she kept were flawless. She

knew the exact time Mr. A. was due to arrive, and the day Mrs. B.'s bill should be presented. She deducted discount for cash from all the tradesmen's accounts; she knew when the meat or butter fell in quality. Nothing escaped her. Not even the visitors' baggage, from which she read their owners' characters in a miraculous fashion.

"I don't like that woman—she's an adventuress," she had said, when the numerous trunks of Madame Baker and her suite had been carried up.

"Anna—what nonsense! Adventuresses don't travel in Rolls-Royce cars with a secretary and maid," protested her brother.

"Her manner's too gracious and her jewellery's too obvious—no, I don't like her," affirmed the countess.

But when the bills, and considerable bills too, were met promptly, he laughed at her and said—

"You'll admit you're wrong now!"

"No, I shan't! She hasn't gone yet!"

"Well, I hope she won't, for a long time!" he laughed.

This was in her fifth week.

Yes, Anna was a shrewd little thing. What she said about Miss Kemp relieved his feelings. If Anna disliked anyone it was useless to contest the point.

"I'm going to Ian's room now," he said. Approaching her, he kissed the back of her neck as she bent over a ledger.

"Anna, you're a darling!" he laughed, and went to the door.

The countess looked up from her work, watched him leave the room, but said no word. Then she sat back in her chair. Hugo was unlike himself these days. He was less buoyant and seemed preoccupied.

The strike and the Baker business had worried him, of course, but his was a nature that rode lightly over most things, and he soon recovered his sunny faith in life. He was two years her senior, but she always felt he was a child, with his quick impulses and intense enjoyment of the present hour, whereas she looked ahead, and wondered and feared. Yes, there was something worrying Hugo. It wasn't the strike or the Baker affair. It was something much more personal to him. Hence her observation upon Miss Kemp's departure.

Sitting there in her chair, she looked out on the garden, so lovely in the morning sunshine. This was her home. She loved every flower, every brick. But one day it would not be her home. That day would come, and for Hugo's sake and happiness she wanted it to come. All that she asked was that when her hour of surrender came, it would be into worthy hands. She thought, when Hugo had kissed her, he was going to say something, but he had gone without speaking. It did not perturb her. When Hugo had anything to say, she was confident she would be the first to hear it.

A dog barked and raced across the terrace. The noise broke her reverie. It was Calvin, Madame Baker's Borzoi, playing with the chauffeur.

The countess leaned over the open ledger.

June 13. *Mr. J. Russell.* 1 *bottle Pommery, dry,* 40*s.*; 1 *bottle Selz,* 4*s.*; *Laundry,* 8*s.*, she wrote in her neat handwriting.

II

Count Hugo walked to the east wing in which Ian Crawley's two rooms were situated. He tapped on on the door and entered.

The room was a large one, high ceilinged and long. The windows commanded a superb view of the Königsberg which this morning had not a cloud upon its rugged head. At a desk in the largest window sat Ian Crawley, in his shirt sleeves, a pipe in his mouth. The desk was strewn with sheets of paper torn from the pad on which he was writing as the count entered.

"Am I interrupting you?" asked the younger man, pausing on the threshold.

"You are!" said Crawley, turning with a smile on his face; "but I like being interrupted. You know how I hate writing. Come in!"

The count closed the door behind him. Ian must have been at work for some time, for the desk was littered with sheets of paper, each covered with his minute handwriting.

As he looked at this labour, the count could not help smiling. It was really an extraordinary thing. They had been accused of having a famous novelist hiding in their castle. The Press had been invited to search everywhere. They had questioned himself and Anna, Miss Bennett, Lady Prudence and Crawley; they had lurked in the grounds and watched the gate —all to no purpose. And yet, had they but known, a famous novelist was in hiding at Schloss Edelstein. It had been a secret well kept by four of them, by Anna, Miss Bennett, Lady Prudence and himself. For the man working at that desk in the window was Conder Crawley—Ian Conder Crawley—to give him his full name. At this particular moment translations of the last volume of his great saga of English life, *Time's Journey*, were to be seen in the window of almost every bookshop in Europe.

At the apex of his vogue, with his plays running in London, New York, Paris, Berlin and Rome, Conder Crawley, sadly aware that to become famous is

to become the target of a thousand worries, had fled from London. Without silence and seclusion the artist could not work. That was Madame Baker's idea, and it was his. It was probably the only idea they had in common, though their conception of it varied greatly. Madame Baker professed to flee from the fame that did not pursue her, and affected proof of its pursuit by ostentatious seclusion. Conder Crawley envied the poor woman her freedom from the prison she coveted. Here, in his friend's house, he shut out the world, his secret well guarded by the friends who shared it.

Throughout the commotion of these last weeks he had worked steadily, because in work he found the best anchorage of sanity. And sanity was the most notable quality of Ian Crawley. It had compelled the multitude to feel the power of his work, so understanding, so sensitive, and yet, withal, never losing its perfect balance in the detached portrayal of character. It was no trick of artistic creation, no pose deliberately assumed. His unfailing sense was the open quality of the man himself. It had been felt by his boyhood's friends, for it was to Ian, as he was affectionately known, that they looked in their difficulties. Karl, in his hour of trial, had turned to him. It was to Ian he had commended his young brother Hugo, a mere boy, when the cataclysm struck Europe and Earth's foundations shook.

Hugo's smile sprang from various thoughts in his mind at that moment. It would be delightful to enjoy the astonishment of Madame Baker if she could be told that the real thing, Genius, and its fitful lover, Fame, existed in the room under hers! It would be delightful to let the gentlemen of the Press know how 'hot' they had been in their hide-and-seek, to have witnessed their astonishment on learning that the

' Mr. Crawley, one of the guests ' who denied emphatically that the famous novelist was anywhere in hiding in the schloss, was a really famous novelist himself. There was an element of comedy in this lamentable business. He smiled now, as he looked at Ian Crawley carrying on his work, conscious how fantastic the comedy was.

" Good morning, Ian," he said, entering. " I didn't know you were at work."

" That doesn't matter, my boy ! " said Crawley, laying down his pen. " I started an hour ago by changing one adjective, and now the whole page's gone overboard. Well, and how's the Genius this morning ? "

" She's had an excellent night. But there's another cloud gathered. Our friend the baron has been busy in the town. Mr. Russell went down there last night. They've only one theory, which is Kneller's—all this is a put-up affair to get publicity for this place ! "

He straddled himself across a chair and stuck his hands in the pockets of his shorts.

" Mr. Russell's just murderous about Kneller—we'll be having a shooting sensation here next," he laughed. " You're all of you splendid, the way you've stood the racket. Lady Prudence told Anna she'd stay another month now, and the Russells are staying too. Anna insists on the Genius going as soon as is possible—which means as soon as a woman is supposed to get back a memory she never lost ! "

" So that's your theory," said Crawley, plugging his pipe. " That poor woman seems to have only one faithful adherent left."

" Who—Cavello ? He has to look faithful, it's his job ! "

"No—I don't mean Cavello. I mean Miss Kemp. She really believes Madame Baker lost her memory. She said in the drawing-room last night that whatever her faults, Madame Baker was adored by her dog and her maid, and that that was a good test of character."

The count pulled his hands out of his pockets and smacked his brown legs.

"I say, Ian, she's a jolly good sort, isn't she?" he cried, enthusiastically.

"Very—I like little Miss Kemp," said Crawley, slowly.

There was silence. The novelist drew away at his pipe and covertly watched his young friend, who was now leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, minutely examining his finger-nails.

"She's going on Saturday—I'm sorry," he said, quietly.

Crawley took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Is that all?" he asked, smiling at his friend.

The count looked up and saw Crawley's eyes fixed on him. He made no answer and, embarrassed by the question, got up and walked to the window at the far end of the room. Then he turned and, going towards the novelist, seated himself on the edge of his desk, one leg swinging as he talked.

"I don't say more, Ian—because—oh, it's not as simple as that! There's so much to consider. And it's stupid to even discuss it, because I've had no encouragement. In fact, I've had the reverse. She's snubbed me unmercifully whenever I've shown any interest. She's friendly and——"

He broke off and watched his leg swinging. Then, looking at Crawley—

"I say, Ian, what made you make that re-

mark just now about 'is that all'? Have you noticed anything — anything she's shown?" he asked.

Crawley put his hand on the boy's knee.

"Yes—plenty of resentment——" he said, slowly.

"Exactly——"

"Of your conduct with Miss Russell," he continued, ignoring the interruption, "which has been scandalous!"

Edelstein stared at his friend, and for a moment doubted his seriousness.

"But——"

"Let me finish, Hugo. For a whole week you took Miss Russell—or perhaps I should say, the girl took you, on all the mountain walks, to the Amsee, down into the town for coffee, and at nights to the cinemas."

"Twice to the cinema!" protested the count.

"Twice—the pictures are only changed twice in one week. For five afternoons Miss Kemp was left to play singles with a shocking player like myself. Fortunately, Miss Bennett took her out one afternoon, and I motored her to St. Johann another."

"But she didn't want me, Ian!"

"Naturally, not then—until a fortnight ago, that is, during the time of which we're talking, for since this Baker affair you've been too busy to see much of her, and, before, she thought you were a married man. Any decent young woman would snub a man like that."

"Good heavens, Ian! I never thought of that!" cried the count, springing off the table.

"And to get your revenge, you start up a tremendous friendship with that flighty Russell girl. You want spanking, Hugo!"

" Kicking," admitted the young man, sadly, pacing the room.

" There's something else you should know," said Crawley, relighting his pipe. " Miss Bennett told me it in confidence yesterday. I'm breaking that confidence, but I think she'll excuse me. When young Anthony Thurlestone came here on a visit to his aunt he fell head-over-heels in love with Miss Kemp. So badly, in fact, that two days later he told her so. It seems she told him he was too young to know his own mind, which is true enough, and made him promise not to talk such rubbish again. He went back to Munich the first thing next morning, a Monday. Then he was here again—without any warning——"

" So that's what brought him here in such a hurry ! " exclaimed Edelstein.

" Yes—not his aunt, as she imagined at first. Half an hour later he told her what he'd come for—he was going to propose to Miss Kemp. You can picture the scene. Lady Prudence pleading, then threatening to wire his guardian and mother. It was no use. He went straight to Miss Kemp and asked her to marry him."

The count stopped suddenly in his pacing. He stared at his friend.

" Then—oh, my God !—that's why she doesn't—she can't——" he stammered.

" Nonsense, Hugo—she turned him down promptly. It finished the poor boy. He left for Munich the same night."

The count moistened his lips. Then he sat down. A moment later he stood up again.

" So that's why he left. Anna thought he was crazy to go like that," he said.

" He was, I expect, with despair, poor young devil.

I suppose you understand what this means ? " asked Grawley.

" Yes—I've a chance, and I don't deserve it."

" Don't be an egotist, Hugo—I'm not thinking of you. I'm thinking of that girl. Do you understand what she's done ? She's turned down a chance of marriage with one of the richest and, I might add, one of the most charming boys in England. He has everything—birth, wealth, appearance. He'll be the Earl of Bottesford one day, unless his brother marries, which is unlikely, for he's a chronic consumptive. I don't know much about Miss Kemp—but I've an idea she works hard for a living, and knows what it is to go without things she badly wants. I suspect she's going home because her money's given out, for she told me she'd never lived until she came here, and this place was just paradise. That's what she's done in the honesty of her heart—she's sentenced herself to hard labour for life when she might have secured herself."

" But—she didn't care for him ? " asked the count.

" No—I don't suppose she did. But thousands of women don't allow that to interfere with a certainty of comfort and an assured position. It may have been only a boy's infatuation on his part ; he might have repented his act later—but she would have been lifted above necessity. In her place, I think I should have taken him, and chanced the storm it would have aroused from all his relations. They might have bought her off, at a price——"

" Ian, you don't suggest she'd let herself be bought off ! " protested his friend.

" I am presupposing she was the type to make the adventure without loving him. It wouldn't be hard to care for an attractive boy like that—with all the assets of life to set off his youth."

"Jove, Ian—you make me tremble," said the count.

"Why should you tremble—what's it to you?"

The two friends faced each other. Crawley saw it was a man, not a boy, returning his unfaltering look. It cheered him. He liked to see mettle in a man.

"What is it to me?—it's everything! I loved her from the moment I saw her," said the count.

Crawley put his hands on both the boy's shoulders.

"Then, my lad—don't waste the next two days. But be sure you know your own mind."

"I do, Ian—but there's a lot to consider," he answered, gravely.

Crawley withdrew his hands and went to his desk.

"I think I understand. Family?" he asked.

"Yes," said the count, reluctantly.

"You must make a decision on that point, and never go back on it. Before the war, it would have been impossible. I see that. Now—but I don't know. That must be your own responsibility—perhaps she wouldn't share it. It was in Thurlestone's case—it's in yours."

The count did not answer. There was much to consider. There was his own insecure position, and there was Anna, his partner in battle for the House of Edelstein. But there were only two days now. He must face the question promptly.

"I'm stopping your work, Ian," he said, after a long silence. "I'll go—and thank you terrifically."

"Eh?—terrific——"

"Sorry—tremendously!" he cried.

The door closed. Crawley sat smoking and thinking for a minute. Then he stared out of the window. Clouds had come up from nowhere and were obscuring

the Königsberg. That meant rain later—a thunderstorm probably. The air was oppressive this morning.

He picked up his pen and resumed work until the lunch bell sounded.

XXV DARKNESS

I

PAMELA had arrived at that period when things are done with the regretful knowledge that they are done for the last time, that with Saturday came severance from this enchanted scene. So on a sunny morning of June, when the gentians splashed the hillsides with azure, when pale-rose primulas and purple anemones with golden hearts lay in drifts at the feet of the slender pines, Pamela leaned out of her window, with a longing to conserve for ever in her memory the prodigal loveliness cast over valley and mountainside. It would never be hers again, and she felt it all now with the sharp sense of coming loss. Youth was still hers by which to measure this rapture, for in these days she was young as never had she been young or could be again.

The mirror before which she dressed these June mornings, with the sun streaming in to touch her hair with its gold, to warm her shoulders with its caress, the mirror, too, had a kindness and grace that no looking-glass in London had ever revealed. Before it stood a new and radiant Pamela, a little—but not yet fearfully—plumper, with some lines gone from the

brow, and oh, such health in the cheeks and vitality in the eyes.

So she sang these mornings, and rayed out her hair with the comb, and wondered how princesses living in castles, whether in the Tyrol or elsewhere, could ever be bored. Young, beautiful, happy—all those Hans Andersen attributes—but not rich. No, decidedly poor indeed, with only two more days in the rôle of the fairy princess.

To-day was Friday. Next Friday she would be in London, at Hollyhock Villas—ridiculous name for houses that were not villas and had never seen hollyhocks! Next Friday she would be—but what would she be doing next Friday? Probably sitting in an outer office waiting for an impudent office boy to bring back the message that the manager could not be seen, and, moreover, they had no vacancies. Then, after a dispiriting tramp up and down staircases, lunch in some noisy, smelly little teashop, where the waitresses were offhand and the food bad. After that, with sixpence more spent than intended—

"Oh, stop it, Pamela!" she said to the cheerful creature in the mirror. "You may be killed in an accident going home, and be spared all that, if you're lucky."

Then she laughed, because it was always better to laugh when life wouldn't bear thinking about. At this moment in came Greta with the breakfast tray—big, healthy Greta, fussy as a dog and clumsy as a calf, but always grinning and not minding another race up and down four flights of stairs if something was missing from the tray; Greta, with the serial story of her Rudolf, which had now reached the stage of a villainess on the scene, the wheelwright's daughter, who was leading weak Rudolf by the nose on the nights Greta wasn't free to stop it.

One morning, when the tearful chapter was being related, Pamela moved by rustic woe, had given Greta a pair of silk stockings. They proved too small in the feet, but she solved the problem by cutting off the toe-caps and adding some larger ones. Rudolf had admired them enormously, she reported the next day, and was sorry Miss Kemp wasn't a man. He badly wanted a silk tie. Yes, she liked Greta, and Greta liked her.

At ten o'clock Pamela was dressed and out. She made a call at the Travel Bureau to get money and the times of her train connections. She bought a carved native pipe, with silver lid, for Mr. Jenkinson, who had never been abroad, and would die without proving that England was an island, or a foreigner was just yourself in somebody else's country. Then Pamela went for her morning coffee, half the joy of which was the general gossip and the presence of Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence.

Lady Prudence had improved much of late. She was still reserved and undeniably superior, with that detachment with which a slight stupidity endows a person. She had moments, however, when she sparkled, in a sub-acid manner, and her acceptance of Miss Bennett's boisterous banter could only have been possible to a nature of unshakable loyalty. Unshakable, yes, that was the word that described Lady Prudence. If mountains fell, she would behave beautifully. Once her friend, nothing could uproot you. It was a quality, in these days of scratch-as-scratch-can, much to be admired, thought Pamela.

In response to the beckoning of Miss Bennett and her friend, Pamela seated herself at their table.

"What time's your train to-morrow?" asked Miss

Bennett, when she learned that Pamela had booked her seat on the express from Vienna.

"Ten-twenty—I'm so thankful I haven't to rise early," said Pamela.

"I think it's ridiculous your going, when the bathing becomes delightful and the summer visitors are arriving. But you haven't gone yet. There are such things as railway strikes. I shall order one!" declared Miss Bennett. "But I don't think even that will be necessary. No one has ever left Kitzburg within a week of their announced departure. And having gone, everyone returns, somehow. This is my third year. Lady Prudence came for a week and here she is. The combination of food, scenery and scandal is irresistible!"

"Scandal, my dear?" questioned Lady Prudence. "What a character you give the place!"

"All successful holiday resorts know that a fresh supply of scandal is as necessary as a pure supply of water!"

"I think Miss Kemp should not go before our great event," said Lady Prudence. "It's so near now. I begin to feel excited."

"What is that?" asked Pamela, wondering what could make Lady Prudence excited.

"The opening of the cable railway, of course! It's the greatest day of the count's life. There's little more than a week now. I am looking forward to seeing the top of the Kitzberg," said Lady Prudence.

"Pru, my dear! Again and again," emphasised Miss Bennett, between puffs at the one cigarette a day her friend disapproved of, "you have assured me you haven't the slightest desire to go to the top of the Kitzberg, or any other mountain."

"Janet, ascending a mountain on foot——"

"There are donkeys——" ejaculated Miss Bennett.

"Oh, by donkey—which is worse—is too laborious. But by railway——"

The count entered and came up to their table.

"You look excited, count," said Miss Bennett, greeting him.

"I am excited—terrific—tremendously excited," he said, his face radiant as he took a seat. "I've just seen the chief engineer. What do you think—they're testing the cable this afternoon. That's sooner than we expected! Nearly a week sooner!"

"Oh, count, you must be careful. Nothing would induce me to make the first trip—supposing it slipped or broke!" said Lady Prudence.

"Well, I'll go with you," said Miss Bennett, firmly.

"And I," agreed Pamela.

"My dears, you mustn't think——" began Lady Prudence.

"Oh, there's no danger, Lady Prudence—and thanks so much," laughed the count, "but nobody's going up to-day. They're only loading the car to test the climbing capacity. I came in here because I wanted to ask you all to come this afternoon to the first halting station. I'll get donkeys, and we can start at two, if you don't mind hurrying over lunch. Now, do all of you come!" he pleaded. "This is a really great occasion—a sort of 'private view' just to ourselves!"

"Nothing could keep us away! Of course, we're coming," said Miss Bennett.

"But, donkeys, Janet, don't——"

"Prudence, you're coming if you're carried in a litter—I won't hear of it!" declared Miss Bennett, firmly.

"That's topping!" cried the count, using one

of the English expressions he loved. "Will you excuse me if I rush away?—I've such a lot to do this morning!"

He went, radiant, finding life a most wonderful heritage on this great day. The engineer's news had even swept away the ponderous thoughts with which he had emerged from Ian Crawley's room, such is the single-mindedness of youth, which can hold but one ambition at a time in its intense experience.

"I am so sorry," said Lady Prudence, paying the bill as they prepared to leave, "that the count is falling into such slangy speech. 'Topping' is a word I particularly dislike. But I suppose contact with that American girl is bound to have its effect!"

Miss Bennett pulled on her gloves and looked at her friend with pathos in her eyes.

"Prudence, my dear, your etymology is as preposterous as your refusal to ride up mountains. 'Topping,' unless I am much mistaken, owes nothing to the invigorating influence of America on our anæmic speech. Nothing, I'm sure, my dear! 'Topping' was born at Oxford and has served in the Guards. And what word could be more applicable! When that car touches the summit I shall shout 'Topping!'"

Lady Prudence led the way out of the café, with a smile like a wintry sun. Dear Janet was quite incorrigible.

At one o'clock there was a stealthy silence in the valley. The Königsberg had been blotted out by a wall of steely cloud. The sun, high overhead, looked down through a vaporous heat haze. The birds twittered with an ominous loudness in the still garden. The earth seemed expectant and scarcely breathed.

"There's a bad storm coming up!" said Mr. Crawley, as they went in to lunch.

"Very bad—look at the barometer!" cried Mr. Russell, tapping it as a doctor taps the chest of a sick man. "There's a Middle West thoroughness about these storms. They can give points to one of our 'northers,' the way they make that needle hop some!"

"I refuse to be coerced by you or a barometer," declared Miss Bennett. "We are going up the Kitzberg if the heavens fall!"

"They'll fall sure enough!" avowed Mr. Russell. "I give it an hour."

Within half an hour the heavens fell, fell as no one in the schloss or in Kitzburg ever remembered them falling. Pamela was not afraid of cows, dark lanes or lightning, but on this occasion fear clutched at her heart. They had finished lunch and sat, for mutual courage, in the drawing-room. The count, who had been at the lower cable station, engrossed in final details for the afternoon test, arrived home wet through.

"There'll be nothing done to-day," he said, hiding his disappointment under a forced cheerfulness, "but to-morrow——"

"I shan't be here to-morrow—what wretched luck!" cried Pamela.

"Oh, you must stay!" said the count, the rain running from his clothes until a pool gathered about his feet.

"Hugo—do change at once!" pleaded the countess.

A terrific thunderclap drowned his reply. It leapt upon them without warning, as though the firmament had split. The rain answered with a violence that spread its drumming uproar over road and courtyard.

Like a ship cleaving a head wave, the schloss seemed to quiver, the world obscured beyond its streaming windows. Then the lightning, as if contending over the heads of the mountains, lost direction and burst in vivid flame, crimson and white and yellow, with cressets of fire that fell from the ramparts of the heavens. Like the lifting of a barrage, the silence that awaited each fresh onslaught was more terrifying than the thunder. An unseen conspiracy was whispered across the sky, the sound of faint dissent rumbled, to be overtaken by a long gathering of accord that finally launched itself in one tremendous report over the body of the prostrate earth.

Would the mountains endure, would this land-built refuge of impotent man stand fast beneath the fury sweeping the lightning-riven skies? They listened, unbelieving that one moment of violence could still be overreached by another, for surely the rivers had risen, the torrents burst their ravines, the mountains abased their proud heads.

Then it went, growling southwards with a blacker vista, and a reprieved world listened to its own peace. But only for a space. As if malignant with an unspent fury, the storm leapt back upon them, lashed itself anew with fire and thunder, with falling flame and drumming bombardment. The rain, wearied, faltered, and then, renewed from some passionate source, again blinded the world with its falling curtain. For one hour, for two hours it fell, while they watched from the windows of the schloss for a break in the sky.

But with the return of daylight, weary with expended passion, there was no cessation of that long cry of falling rain on roof and meadow. The sullen sunset faded, a mortifying wound in the crimsoned bosom of the hills, the night came down, moonless and swift,

a hundred torrents filled the darkness with their turbulent voices, and all the land lay under the uproar of racing waters, while again, like a disturbed giant, the thunder muttered and shifted in its unseen retreat.

The house party, imprisoned by the storm, after dinner played bridge or read. Miss Bennett, aided by an unbroken spell of industry, finished at last her birds, whose flight had taken such lengths of silken thread. The canvas was released from its frame and passed around for comment and admiration. For Pamela it symbolised the end of this marvellous six weeks. She remembered vividly her first sight of that embroidery, with Miss Bennett's severe head bent over the frame, her tight little mouth opening and closing with each stab of the needle, each stab accompanied by some remark as piercing.

So when, in turn, the result of Miss Bennett's patient toil was passed to her own hands, Pamela held it long, since so many emotions and thoughts of her own had gone with that tapestry of flying birds.

"It's beautiful—it's something I can't forget, ever," said Pamela at last, letting the words betray the thoughts within.

Perhaps Miss Bennett, instinctive, alert little lady that she was, saw the girl was looking at something beyond her handiwork, at something else that had been woven so beautifully in the warp and woof of these enchanted days. So she said nothing, except "Thank you, my dear," when she heard Pamela's praise.

When, finally, Pamela, preparing to go, had said good night to Lady Prudence, Mrs. Waring, Mr. Crawley and the count at the bridge-table, Miss Bennett contrived to be near the door and followed her out into the corridor.

" My dear," she said, in a low voice, the moment the door had closed on them, " if you can find room in your luggage, would you care to take this—as a little memento of our happy evenings ? "

She thrust the rolled-up embroidery into Pamela's hand and smiled at her.

" We are all so sorry you must go—we have enjoyed you so much," she said, accompanying her along the corridor towards the stairs.

Pamela, surprised, found herself unable to express her thanks. The words stuck in her throat, and she must have seemed ungrateful and stupid, walking with Miss Bennett like a mute. They mounted the stairs and then, at last, near Miss Bennett's bedroom door, Pamela stammered her thanks.

" I would rather have this," she said, slowly, fighting a tearful impulse that must not be indulged, " than anything else because—because——"

But she could not finish the sentence, and Miss Bennett, seeing why she could not, suddenly put her arms around Pamela and kissed her.

" Good night, my dear," she said, quickly, and, then, with a frightened hurriedness quite unlike Miss Bennett, she entered her room and closed the door.

II

Pamela slept fitfully through the night. She travelled in anxious anticipation the long journey home. She saw again the dull fronts of Hollyhock Villas, the sunless top room where she had lived with her grandmother, and must now live alone. She had run away from the bleak loneliness of her life, but it had to be faced now. There was the daily battle of existence to be fought; an existence, at its best, with

nothing of the beauty, the refinement, the social charm of these days so swiftly gone.

It was regrettable that her last full day had been marred by the storm. She seemed fated not to make the ascent of the Kitzberg, not to see the railway in which the count's hope was centred. The storm had robbed her of a pleasant excursion in congenial company, of the count himself, for all the evening he had been in the midst of his guests, imprisoned in the drawing-room.

She had seen so little of him these last days. The mornings, the afternoons and evenings had slipped away. Once or twice on the tennis court or in the garden they had been together, but always something had called him away just when they were losing that strange watchfulness of each other which had never been banished from their intercourse. Even in his impulsive moments there had been a look of apprehension, as if he feared again she might snub him, as in those days of her stupid error. Inherent reticence had not permitted her to show him how much she wished to retrieve her mistake, to reveal the pleasure his presence gave her, the—yes, she would be honest —the love she felt for him.

The clocks in the valley struck twelve. The rain was still falling steadily. Twelve, she must go to sleep. Greta was calling her at eight. Was everything packed? Yes. Miss Bennett was a darling; it was sad to think she would never see her again. That flight of birds was beautiful. She would always think of Kitzburg when she looked at it—and Miss Bennett and Lady Prudence. The Russell girl had gone out after dinner, despite the rain. Mrs. Waring had said something about young Count Sielan. Mrs. Waring knew everybody's movements. If Hugo—Hugo?—yes, she could call him Hugo in her own

thoughts—if Hugo had gone down into the town also, she would have wondered. That was silly. He had taken nothing but polite notice of Phyllis Russell for a whole week. He was above marrying for money only. Hugo——

Half-past ! She must really go to sleep.

Later, she was awakened by something she could not define. Was it a nightmare—or the thunder returning ? There was a dull roar, slow and massive, which died into silence, but left a singular sensation of instability. Her windows had rattled, and, in those half-dreamy moments of her first awakening, it was as though the schloss had swayed or the earth beneath it had trembled.

Pamela looked at the clock. Half-past two. There was an extraordinary stillness now. It made her wide awake. She listened. Nothing, except the rain outside and singing along the guttering. Yes ! That was a sound. Someone was stirring. She heard a door creak. Then footsteps along the corridor.

What had happened ? She was certain now there was something. She switched on the light.

Hastily putting on a dressing-gown and slippers, Pamela went to her door and opened it a couple of inches. Someone was at the end of the corridor, talking. It was Mr. Crawley's voice.

" Is that you, Hugo ? Yes, I did, what is it ? " he called.

" I don't know—I heard a rumbling, about a minute ago—it woke me," said a voice from below, the count's.

" So did I—it wasn't thunder ? "

" No—I don't think so. Did you feel the place shake ? "

" I'm not sure—it was most peculiar, just as I woke," said Mr. Crawley.

Someone else had appeared.

"Oh, no, it's nothing!" he said, reassuringly. "We thought we heard something. The count's going downstairs to see everything's all right."

"But my ornaments rattled!" said the voice of Mrs. Waring.

"P'rap's it was thunder—anyhow, it's over," replied Mr. Crawley.

Pamela stepped out on to the landing.

"Oh, is that you, Miss Kemp," whispered Mrs. Waring, advancing like a conspirator, cloaked and silent footed. "Whatever's the matter?"

Another door opened. A gentleman in a magnificent crimson dressing-gown appeared. It was Signor Cavello.

"Ah—excusa me—zer ees somesing?"

"No, nothing!" said Mr. Crawley, firmly.

There were voices on the lower landing now. The two forces joined on the upper landing. Lady Prudence, very corpse-like in her cerements; Mr. Russell, robust, and Mrs. Russell inflated in her dressing-gown. They compared impressions.

"Miss Bennett would sleep through an earthquake," complained Lady Prudence, when her absence was noticed.

"Perhaps it was an earthquake!" said Mrs. Waring. "I was in one in Sicily. It rumbled just like that!"

The count appeared.

"Everything's all right below. I looked out into the courtyard. I could see nothing. It's still raining hard," he reported.

"Well, we're doing no good here!" said Mr. Russell. "That storm's still fooling around, I guess. Good night, folks!"

Mrs. Russell followed him. Mrs. Waring wanted to

explain just how she felt in July, four years ago, when she was awakened at Messina by——

"Good night," said Lady Prudence. "It's very cold!"

The doors closed. Pamela went back to bed. This time she fell asleep quickly.

XXVI RUIN

I

Count Hugo slept badly throughout the night. Usually he was a splendid sleeper, but he had not retired with a mind at ease. Everything had conspired to defeat him. It had been his intention, during the afternoon excursion to the Kitzberg, to detach Pamela from the party. Then, in the privacy of the pine woods, as they mounted the steep track, he would have contrived somehow to say the things he could no longer keep within him.

Immediately after leaving Ian, and the conversation that had brought him to a fateful decision, he had gone to Anna, dear, level-headed, unselfish Anna. She had shown no surprise.

"But Anna—this affects you. What do you say—we've no secrets, Anna!" he had asked.

She stood, pale and self-possessed, her eyes never wavering as she answered—

"You love her, Hugo—this is not a fancy?"

She had reason to ask him that, so well she knew his wayward and impulsive nature.

"Anna—I can never be happy again without her. I know it. I am serious," he avowed.

"Then what I think or feel mustn't affect you. Your future must be settled without me. This moment is inevitable," she said, quietly.

He took her hands then and drew her to him.

"But Anna—you must tell me! You like Pamela? You would be happy with her here?" he asked.

"If she would like me here."

"Oh, Anna!" he cried.

"Hugo, you have no right to make her your wife unless this is her home—her own home."

"But she would want you, Anna—I know she would," he affirmed.

"Then I should stay—I should be happy to stay—until—if ever I——"

She hesitated, and he held her tightly and kissed her, reading her thought.

"That is the only reason for which you could leave us!" he said.

So that difficulty had been faced. The ordeal had filled him with dread. But Anna helped him, as Anna always had. He had looked for Pamela then, but she was down in the town. And at that moment the engineer had come with news of the afternoon's test. So there had been no opportunity of talking to Pamela.

Troubled with the need of speaking to her, anxious about the manner of his approach and her answer, his brain was in no condition for sleep. About two o'clock he had at last dozed off, to be awakened by the strange commotion that had disturbed the household.

Now, as he lay in bed, the dawn broke, misty and heavy, and crept greyly into his room. Six o'clock. He lay restless and rehearsing his task. Her train left at ten-thirty. Somehow she might be persuaded to remain a few more days. When she heard what he

had to tell her, she would surely consent. There was nothing so important to a woman as the thing he would say—if it had any importance at all.

He tried to recall what signs she had shown, what encouragement his concealed emotions of the last fortnight had received. Almost nothing, no words certainly, only a thoughtful, lingering look at him when she thought she was unobserved. Wasn't he presuming too much? And asking too much. She was English, her homeland was England. He was asking not only for the surrender of her liberty, but of her nationality, all the ties of birth and custom. She risked everything. Would she?

Seven o'clock. He got up, bathed and dressed. When he threw back the shutters of his windows, the valley lay hidden beneath a blanket of white mist, but the top of the Königsberg was visible through rifts of cloud. It had ceased to rain. It might be a fine day.

Pamela would be rising early, too. He would seek her out after breakfast. She would probably be in the grounds for the last time. If not, he would send Anna to her.

Downstairs he found Anna already at work, in cõunsel with Elise over the day's meals. Then they breakfasted together, in their private sitting-room, invaded at intervals only by Ian.

"Is Miss Kemp going, Hugo?" she asked, as soon as they were alone.

He looked at her despairingly.

"Anna—I couldn't get her alone. They were all in the drawing-room last night, and she slipped out with Miss Bennett while I was playing bridge."

The countess regarded him a moment sadly.

"Hugo, you must speak to her—somehow. You mustn't leave it until the last minute!"

"I'm going to, Anna, as soon as she comes down," said her brother.

A maid tapped and entered. A man had called from the Axenholtz farm. There had been a terrible landslide in the night. Would he please go out and see the man, who had lost some of his cattle.

"Then—that was what we heard in the night!" said the count, rising. "I'll be back in a moment."

It was several minutes before he came back. When he entered, the countess sprang to her feet with a cry. The face of her brother was terrible. He stood in the doorway and looked at her, white and shaking.

"Anna—Anna!" he called. "The landslide's buried the station—and the line's wrecked. There's nothing—nothing left!"

She went to him and held him, while he poured out the story brought by the farmer. They didn't know yet, until the mist cleared, how large the landslide was, but old Sultzer's cattle were buried and the station couldn't be seen.

"Oh, Anna! Anna!" he repeated in distraction.

And then he buried his head on her shoulder.

But not for long. He fought down his emotion and began to stir. She was to let Ian know at once. He was saddling the horse, calling at the engineer's lodging, and then going up to see the destruction. If the landslide had reached as far as the Axenholtz farm it must be tremendous. The face of the precipice must have fallen over five hundred feet.

The engineer was already aware of the catastrophe. He set off at once with the count, and as they came up from the town, through which the news had now

spread, they met Ian Crawley, mounted and awaiting them.

The three horsemen pushed on up the higher valley. The morning mist was now lifting and moving in the currents of the air. Their way led round by the forest, across the ravine, tumultuous with swollen cataracts, and up the opening of the first valley. At the head of this they were suddenly confronted with the scene of destruction.

For a long moment not one of the men spoke. They sat still in their saddles and gazed on the awesome spectacle of ruin spread before them.

Rock, trees, soil, millions of tons of soil, lay in piled disorder where once had been green pastures and fenced fields. And under that mountain of debris was buried, somewhere, now wholly blotted out, the cable-station and the power-house. The ruinous debris had spread down one side of the valley, carrying like a matchbox in its irresistible sweep, old Sultzer's cattle-shed. It lay down now on its side, splintered and collapsed. There were no cattle anywhere.

They looked higher then. The sagging cables told of destruction elsewhere. And as if to exult in the scene, the morning wind drove the woolly mist from off the face of the mountain. At once the origin and cause of the devastation were revealed. An avalanche of rock, severed by terrific violence from the precipitous face of the mountain, had fallen sheer for five hundred feet. It had cut a swathe through the thick forest at the bottom, leaving everything barren in its impetuous course, and had finally spread like a wave over the peaceful fields. The fifth and sixth steel and concrete standards, bearing the cables, had disappeared; not even their bases could be distinguished.

Hugo Edelstein, silent before that scene of terror and annihilation, knew that he looked not only on the smashed idol of his dreams, but upon his irretrievable ruin.

II

The news of the calamity spread rapidly through the schloss. An anxious group gathered on the terrace in an attempt to see the scene of the destruction. The shifting mist suddenly revealed the scarified track of the avalanche and the debris at the base of the precipice. Field-glasses brought into range the plateau at the head of the valley where the power-house had stood.

"No wonder the schloss shook in the night. I knew it must be something like an earthquake," said Mrs. Waring.

"The poor count—my heart aches for him, and the countess, too," cried Mrs. Russell.

Then Lady Prudence appeared, two hours earlier than her custom, and Miss Bennett, whose first act had been to go and console the poor little countess. She, brave soul, maintained a serene bearing amid the general sensation.

Every few minutes fresh news was brought to the schloss. The postman, leaving the morning letters, had heard somehow that the lightning had struck one of the rock 'chimneys' of the precipice, long disintegrated by the weather. The terrific rain had loosened part of the overhanging cliff, which had crashed down upon the chimney, carrying it away. Several farmers had seen the lightning strike the rock at four o'clock in the afternoon. This had undoubtedly weakened the tremendous pillar, which the falling cliff had severed.

Pamela, after a few minutes on the terrace, was compelled to return to her room to complete her packing. For a moment, moved by the disaster that had overtaken the schloss, she thought of cancelling her departure, but on reflection she saw there was nothing she could do. Visitors at times like these proved a hindrance and not a help.

Glancing at her watch, she remembered that she had not returned it to Miss Bennett, who had lent it to her. Baron Kneller had not sent back her own watch. Did he hope that she would call for it at his hotel? It did not seem possible he could be so stupid. Perhaps he would send it later. He did not know she was leaving.

Miss Bennett was in her room. Pamela thanked her for the watch.

"I shall come down to the courtyard when you go," said Miss Bennett.

As soon as Pamela had left, she picked up the watch and walked over to the communicating door between her own room and her friend's.

Lady Prudence, unaccustomed to such early rising, to say nothing of being awakened in the middle of the night, was lying down. She was also fatigued by the commotion in the castle.

"Miss Kemp's just been to my room and has returned this," said Miss Bennett, holding out the watch.

Lady Prudence looked at it, and then at her friend.

"I want you to give it to her—now," said Miss Bennett, "before she goes."

Lady Prudence sat up, mystified. Everything was so strange this morning.

"But isn't that your watch, Janet?" she asked.

"No."

"No?"

" It's Tony's," said Miss Bennett, putting it in Lady Prudence's hand. " No, Tony didn't give it to her, my dear. She doesn't know it's his watch. When she lost her own the boy rushed down into the town and bought this. He daren't give it to her because he knew she wouldn't accept it, and he was terrified of what you'd say if you knew. So he asked me to swear it was one of my innumerable gold watches which I'm only too glad to lend. A bumping lie, told at Tony's request, and largely due to you, my dear."

" What a story ! " exclaimed Lady Prudence. " My dear Janet, why don't you complete your mission and give it to Miss Kemp, if it is not to be returned ? "

Lady Prudence was hurt and she hoped she showed it.

" Now, Pru—you're to be sensible. Miss Kemp is going soon. I can't give her the watch, it isn't mine. You can't send it back to that poor boy, it would open the wound again, and I'm sure he'd want her to keep it. You're the only person who can do the thing gracefully. You can tell her it's Tony's, and say you hope she'll accept it for his sake."

" Janet, dear——" began Lady Prudence, slowly, for she had not wholly grasped the situation. But Miss Bennett did not wait for her objection.

" I'm going to send to Miss Kemp and say you'd like to see her. And be your own sweet self, my dear," exclaimed Miss Bennett, leaving the room.

A few minutes later a somewhat nervous Pamela knocked at Lady Prudence's door and entered.

" My dear, how kind of you to spare me a minute. Do sit down ! " cried Lady Prudence.

Pamela sat down and looked at Lady Prudence, who seemed as nervous as herself.

" Yes ? " she asked, breaking an awkward silence.

" Miss Kemp—I've a singular request to make to you. The watch Miss Bennett lent you wasn't hers —it was my nephew's. I want you to be kind enough to accept it."

" But—Miss Bennett told me it was hers," said Pamela, astonished.

" Yes—she lied, because Tony asked her to. It seemed, he thought you would not accept his gift— and he was nervous about what I'd say when I knew," added Lady Prudence, with a wry smile. " He wanted Miss Bennett to give it to you as hers, ultimately, but Janet thinks, rightly, you should know the truth. So, my dear——"

Lady Prudence leaned towards Pamela, the watch in her hand.

" Thank you—but I couldn't take it," said Pamela.

" Please—as a favour to me, Miss Kemp, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for what you've done for Tony. Poor boy, he must have embarrassed you very much. He suffered, I know, but he told me in a letter how kind you were to him when you had to tell him there was someone else. You must forgive him for being so impulsive—I am sure he loved you —in his boyish way."

" I am sure he did," said Pamela.

Lady Prudence had placed the watch in her hand. " There was someone else " she had said. The irony of it ! She was quite unconscious of the stab that sentence gave her. Well, everything was over now —Anthony, Hugo, Spring in the Tyrol. She stood up.

" I'm afraid I must go now," she said, quietly.

" Thank you, dear. I shall tell Tony—it will make him happy," said Lady Prudence, accompanying her to the door. But there she suddenly detained Pamela. " My dear, I'm afraid I was not always as

pleasant to you as I should have been. I'm a lonely old woman, and one grows odd that way. So forgive me, please!"

It was a difficult thing for her to say, and Pamela saw a queer, sad smile touching the elder woman's face. Without a word, Pamela leaned forward and kissed her.

"Good-bye, a very pleasant journey, my dear," said Lady Prudence, confused. "And thank you again!"

Outside the door Pamela paused, the watch in her hand. God only knew what was in her heart. Yes, she would be glad to go, quickly. It was all becoming unbearable.

At a quarter to ten the carriage, in which Pamela had arrived at the schloss in such state, was waiting for her in the courtyard. The horses stamped and creaked their harness; Karl, who had brought down the baggage, sat, whip in hand, on the box seat. When Pamela appeared in the hall, Miss Bennett, Mrs. Russell and Mrs. Waring were there to bid her good-bye; also Greta, hovering in the background with a smile on her round rosy face. Then the countess came. Pale with the anxiety of the morning, she did her duty in speeding the parting guest. She apologised for her brother's absence. He would be distressed at not saying good-bye, but he was still up the Kitzberg.

With a last wave of the hand and a forced smile, Pamela was driven out of the gates. They turned into the road, the schloss was shut off by the trees. It was gone. On the lower road they passed the front of it again, the windows she knew so well, the terrace she loved, and next the little town, the archway, the High Street, the hotels, cafés and shops, the old church,

the bridge and the long drop down the valley to the station.

The sun had broken through the morning mist. Woolly clouds rolled up from the mountainsides, revealing homesteads and forests and high plateaux on which were perched the wooden chalets. No, that railway poster at Aldgate hadn't lied. She had spent Spring in the Tyrol. It had exceeded all anticipations.

The heaviness that was in her heart was the sadness of leaving. It was also something else. She had gone without seeing him, without even a goodbye. Poor Count Hugo and the little countess. She loved them both. If only for a moment she had seen Hugo, to tell him how sorry she was. But it would not have helped him. Mrs. Waring had said it meant absolute ruin for them. They had staked everything on that railway.

The carriage swung into the station-yard and stopped. Karl got down from his seat and opened the door, the door with the Edelstein coronet on it, which Pamela had noticed that rainy evening of her arrival. She tipped the youth and followed the porter on to the empty platform. There was half an hour yet, but she liked being in good time. She heard the carriage drive away. She stared at her trunk labelled 'London.' What a strange thing life was! Did that label belong to her, or she to it? London—the old routine again.

Saturday, the twentieth of June. She had been away six weeks. Somehow it seemed a lifetime, and somehow only six hours. She hoped the Channel crossing wasn't rough. Count Hugo was somewhere up there on the Kitzberg.

I

By nine o'clock it appeared as if the whole of Kitzburg had assembled at the foot of the avalanche. An army of volunteers were digging in the hope of rescuing some of old Sultzer's cattle, which might be alive inside the derelict shed. The debris had also buried the road that led up to the milking-huts on the plateau, and it had to be cleared for the carts to pass. It would take several days before the power-house and the cable-station could be cleared—if anything was left of them under that load of rock and soil. The count, Ian Crawley and the engineer climbed up the debris, out of which the cable lines rose, in serpentine twists, and sagging from the bent lower standards. They tried to locate the position of the station.

A shout from below made them look down. Something had created great excitement among the diggers. A man's body had been found, terribly mutilated. Some unfortunate cattleman who had been caught, perhaps, as he went up the road to his work.

They found a plank, and placed the body on it, carrying it to the nearest chalet. The poor fellow was unrecognisable. The digging was renewed with increased vigour. There might be other victims, though it was singular anyone should have been on the road at that hour of the morning.

As the count and his companions came down towards the chalet before which an awed crowd had assembled, they saw the local doctor appear with the police officer. They went up to the doctor, who was conferring in the garden with the owner of the chalet.

"Good morning, count—this is a bad business," said the doctor. "It's a mystery how the baron came to be there at that time."

"The baron?" echoed Edelstein.

"Baron Kneller—we can't identify the body, but we've found papers in his pockets. I've just sent down to the Hôtel Bauer. Come inside."

They followed the doctor into the living-room of the wooden house. A figure, covered with a blanket, lay on the floor. On the table the police officer had methodically spread out the dead man's belongings—a wallet, letters, money, cigarette-case and some other things.

Count Hugo picked up the cigarette-case, glanced at it and turned to the doctor.

"I'm afraid there's no doubt it's Kneller—that's his crest," he said.

The engineer was examining some tins the officer had laid apart.

"Look at these," he said, quietly, to Crawley.

"What are they?"

The engineer made no reply. They followed the count and the doctor out of the room. The crowd opened a way for them to pass.

Since nothing more could be done they returned to the schloss.

"What I don't understand is how Kneller came to be up there at half-past two in the morning," said the count.

"His boots were caked with mud. He must have been climbing somewhere," observed Crawley.

"You don't go climbing in a downpour at half-past two in the morning!" exclaimed the count. "What was the poor fellow doing there?"

"I can tell you, gentlemen," said the engineer, quietly.

The two men looked at him.

"You saw those tin cylinders found in his pocket?" he asked Crawley. "They were containers for dynamite sticks. There was also a spare time-fuse."

They stared at him, speechless with amazement.

"I think I can explain his movements," continued the engineer. "He'd been up to that overhanging ridge above the sixth standard. It was safe enough, but the theory that the storm had brought it down would be plausible. What he hadn't foreseen was that it would sweep on with enough force to bring down the 'chimney.' That started the avalanche, and momentum did the rest. He must have set the time-fuse so as to enable him to get to the lower track, where he probably waited to see the result—and he was caught by it."

His companions said nothing for a time.

"Good heavens! it's incredible!" said Crawley, at last.

"It's the incredible that overtakes villainy like that," grimly observed the engineer.

They walked on in silence again. Then the count spoke.

"I say—I think we'll say nothing about that dynamite. The poor devil's gone. He's ruined me—but at what a price!"

At the gates of the schloss they left the engineer, who walked on into the town. Count Hugo went straight to his office, where he found Anna, and told her the news.

"What time's Miss Kemp going?" he asked, when he had finished.

"She's gone," said the countess.

"Gone!"

He sprang up, glanced at his watch. Then he sat down again.

" I would have liked to say good-bye," he said.

The dejection in his voice touched his sister. She regarded him in silence for a moment.

" Hugo, there's still time. There's half an hour before the train. This came this morning and I've forgotten to give it to her. Take it."

She gave him a small cardboard box with a label attached. On the label was the heading of the Hôtel Bauer. He looked at it dully, and then at his sister watching him.

" Anna—it's no use now. What can I offer her? God knows what'll happen to us," he said, bitterly.

" That's all the more reason—if she's the woman I think she is. Go, now, quick!" she cried, imperatively.

She saw he was still dazed by the catastrophe of the morning. He looked at her a little bewildered, hesitating. Then, with an impulse that showed her all that was in his heart, he caught her to him and kissed her ardently.

" Anna—you're marvellous," he cried. " I'll go."

His cycle was at the door. In a few minutes he was in the town. On the lower road, near the station, he met the carriage returning and stopped it.

" Go back to the station, Karl. I may want you," he said and, again mounting, cycled on.

Pamela, waiting on the platform, heard the sound of horses. She walked to the ticket-gate and was surprised to see the Edelstein carriage coming back. Then she heard her name called and, turning, found the count coming towards her. A glad cry escaped her lips. He had come, then, to say good-bye.

" Miss Kemp! I'm so sorry I wasn't there when you went," he said, and giving her the packet—" This came this morning. Anna forgot it in all the excitement."

Pamela glanced at it. From the Hôtel Bauer. What could it be? She knew no one at the Hôtel Bauer. A registered packet, too. Then, suddenly, she knew what it was. The baron had sent back her watch.

"I'm terribly sorry for you, count. Is it as bad as we feared?" she asked, covering her confusion with the question.

"As bad as it could be—it's absolute ruin for me," he answered.

"Oh, no—not that!" she responded, quickly. "You've too much spirit ever to be ruined."

He regarded her keenly. Had he guessed about the watch?

"Miss Kemp!" he said, intensely.

There was such a note of anxiety in his voice that she looked at him in alarm.

"Don't go!" he cried. "I can't let you go! Listen to me, Pamela!"

He caught her hands in his own while she listened.

II

Crawley, on his way upstairs, was intercepted by Mr. Russell, who came out of his sitting-room.

"Won't you come in?" he said. "We're very anxious to hear your news. It sounds a terrible business."

Crawley went into the room, where Mrs. Russell greeted him. He told them all he knew. Not quite all, for he withheld the dynamite revelation.

"But what was Baron Kneller doing there at that time?" asked Mrs. Russell.

"I can't say," replied Crawley, evasively.

James Russell looked at him keenly.

"Does that mean you can't or you won't?" he

asked, pleasantly. "It's no business of ours, of course. But I'm certain he's the villain of the piece."

Ian Crawley smiled.

"Your certainty isn't misplaced. But I've given the count my word——"

"That's enough for me. Excuse me. I was always a curious fellow," said Mr. Russell. "Sit down, Mr. Crawley. I've been talking to my wife. We're greatly upset over this business. It's hit that young fellow pretty hard?"

"Very. I fear it's ruined him. It's just at a crucial time."

"Anyone else in it?"

"Two Viennese friends of his—they're not so heavily in it—and myself," added Crawley.

"Much—if I may ask?"

"Myself—oh, no, a thousand pounds. But the count mortgaged everything."

"You do smoke?" asked Mr. Russell, offering his cigar-case.

"James—do tell Mr. Crawley what we've been talking about!" burst forth Mrs. Russell. "Sure, I'll have heart failure at this speed!"

"Now, my dear!" replied her husband, soothingly. "Well, to come to the point," he continued, turning to Crawley, "I've been wondering if I could come in on this business. You believe in that railway?"

"Emphatically. I would not have let the boy embark on it if I didn't."

"Good! Then will you tell the count, as soon as he's breathing space, to come right here with his figures. I've one stipulation to make, Mr. Crawley. It's the one stipulation James Russell always makes, or he wouldn't be James Russell. This proposition must have a sound economic basis."

Ian Crawley suppressed a smile at the familiar refrain in the Russell conversation.

"I'll find the count at once," he said, rising. "This will put new heart into the lad."

As soon as the door had closed on him, Mrs. Russell beamed on her husband.

"Why, dad!" she exclaimed. "It's times like these I sure feel it's worth while being a rich man's wife!"

"You scheming old gold-digger!" growled James Russell.

And then he kissed her.

III

Miss Bennett was reading. She was well up on the Ziggurat of Ur when Lady Prudence most unceremoniously burst into the room. Never before had she witnessed her friend in an unceremonious act.

"Well?" she asked, irritably.

"Janet! I looked out of the window just now, when I heard horses. Miss Kemp's lost her train! She's come back!"

"Alone?" asked Miss Bennett, looking over her glasses.

"No—the count's with her."

"Then she hasn't lost her train," answered Miss Bennett, emphatically.

"But——" began Lady Prudence.

"There's been another landslide. The Edelstein's blocked the railway line to London," observed Miss Bennett, laconically. "I am delighted, though not surprised."

THE END

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SCISSORS

NINTH IMPRESSION

Westminster Gazette:—"The best odyssey of youth, before and during the war, we have read. The book is gay with clear courage."

Morning Post:—"The Turkish drums roll with a call as insistent and poignant as the witchery of the Pied Piper's music."

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SAILS OF SUNSET

FIFTH IMPRESSION

Times:—"The writing throughout is on a high level."

Graphic:—"'Scissors' won two desirable things, sincere praise and a generous sale. He gives us another which will confirm him still more as a novelist."

THE LOVE RACK

FOURTH IMPRESSION

Daily Chronicle:—"A moving story, at times tender, at times highly dramatic, told with great skill."

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LITTLE MRS. MANINGTON

FOURTH IMPRESSION

Scotsman :—"The author's inimitable style, the brilliance of his character drawing, the wit and humour of the dialogue, and the engaging ingenuity of the situations, compel the interest of the reader."

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SAGUSTO

FOURTH IMPRESSION

Daily Mail :—"A clever and lively story, with a most ingenious plot."

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THIRD IMPRESSION

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Western Mail :—"Mr. Roberts has won a firm hold on English fiction readers, and this will help appreciably to add to his enviable reputation. He has fashioned no finer cast than he presents here. A perfect study."

Yorkshire Observer :—"He possesses wit and vitality . . . there is deft and subtle mingling of piquancy with poignancy, the ensemble being as appealing an interpretation of the finer attributes of humanity as we have found for a long time."

Church of England Newspaper :—"We are not very frequently these days moved with pity, compassion, laughter, tears and joy in one novel. But we confess that all these emotions kept us and held us in turn throughout the book. . . . He has given us one of the sweetest, rarest, and most delightful stories of recent years."

A Selection from Hodder & Stoughton's New and Forthcoming Novels

THE UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

By A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

Author of "If Winter Comes."

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

THE COURTS OF THE MORNING

By JOHN BUCHAN

Author of "Greenmantle," etc.

Mr. John Buchan has written another full-length novel—a story of pure adventure of the same type as his "Prester John." The chief figures are Sandy Arbuthnot, now Lord Clanroyden, and Mr. John S. Blenkiron, both of whom appear in "Greenmantle." The scene is laid in a South American republic which is brought by accident into international politics. The story tells how the ambition of a great man, which might have played havoc with the peace of the world, is frustrated by a new kind of war. Many of Mr. Buchan's familiar characters appear, and interwoven with the scheme of adventure is Sandy's love-story.

TEMPLE TOWER

A Bull-Dog Drummond Novel by SAPPER

Author of "Bull-Dog Drummond," etc.

Bull-Dog Drummond, on the scent of fresh adventure, decided to investigate the activities of his secretive neighbour Granger. Inquisitiveness drew him into the most amazing adventure of his life, and brought him to death-grips with the hunchbacked stranger, compared to whom Carl Petersen had been "a little turtle dove."

RED ACES

By EDGAR WALLACE

Author of "The Ringer," "The Three Just Men," etc.

Mr. J. G. Reeder is the mildest-looking, softest-spoken detective that ever was; but Mr. J. G. Reeder is famous because Mr. J. G. Reeder *gets his man*. Here are three long J. G. Reeder stories in Edgar Wallace's very best J. G. Reeder style.

THE GALAXY

By SUSAN ERTZ

Author of "Now East, Now West," "Madame Claire," etc.

THE life-story of Laura Deverell, born in 1862, and passing through the wars, tribulations, fashions, fads, ways of living and thinking from that time to this. The daughter of parents who understood none of their children, Laura grows up into a lovely, intelligent and sensitive girl, far from happy at home but seeing no career for herself but marriage. Against her father's wishes—for trade is still barely within the social pale—she marries an armaments manufacturer with whom she is wildly in love. Her marriage partly estranges her from her brother, an idealist and a rebel against materialism; her husband brings her disappointment and infidelity; and it is not until her children are settled and of age that she consents to follow her own heart and go away with Sendler, a German with an English mother. The War breaks in upon the happy married life that her first husband's death at last makes possible, and Sendler suffers three years of internment. Her son is killed, but she eventually finds in her little grandson something of both her son and her brother over again. Standing on an island at Hyde Park Corner one day in January of the present year she looks up at the Milky Way (or Galaxy), which she has always loved. Half blinded by the stars, she steps off the island and is struck by a car. Under the ether during the operation that is necessary she sees the thousand joys of her life streaming across her vision like the stars of the Milky Way. This is probably the finest and the most powerful and moving book Miss Ertz has yet given us.

BLOOD ROYAL

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Perishable Goods," "Blind Corner," etc.

IN this very up-to-date romance, Mr. Yates sets and maintains a tremendous pace, while the scenes are so vivid that, as one lays the book down, one is left with the impression of having witnessed a startling film. "Blood Royal" is, shortly, the passionate love affair of an unhappily affianced royalty and the story of her lover's endeavour to save her future husband's throne. "What my lady wants, my lady must have." So blindly, and against all reason, Richard Chandos takes up the cudgels on behalf of the worthless princeling to whom his darling is betrothed. Time and tide are against him, and the Prince himself is jealous and deeply mistrusts his help; but because it is the Grand Duchess' wish, Chandos strains every nerve to save for his rival the throne he so little deserves. The plot is unusual, and the action is very swift: there is no time for philosophy and less for sentiment; love is made, so to speak, under fire.

THE TREASURE HOUSE OF MARTIN HEWS

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Author of "Matorni's Vineyard," etc.

HENRY OWSTON, arriving at the sinister mansion on the marshes, with ninepence and the return half of a third-class ticket to London in his pocket, enters the service of Martin Hews, apparently a cripple with no legs, who spends his life in a marvellously contrived electrical chair, and is the owner of a collection of many of the famous *objets d'art* of the world, in the acquisition of which he not infrequently makes use of two gangs of criminals. These gangs are now, however, at war, and Owston's chief occupation is to track down the head of the opposing gang, a man of such talent in disguise that he is able to pass undetected either in the reception rooms of the great houses of the West End, or in the lowest dive of the East End. In spite of all precautions, mechanical and human, the enemy eventually gains access to Martin Hews' study, the true secret of his deformity is disclosed to his everlasting humiliation, and he is last seen disappearing down the secret passage into his Treasure House. A true Oppenheim story, full of drama and the thrill of adventure.

ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD

By DENIS MACKAIL

Whose "Greenery Street" is the lovers' walk of fiction

ANOTHER part of what wood? For no wood is mentioned anywhere in Mr. Mackail's new full-length novel. Yet we seem to recognise that title as a kind of quotation—and so it is; a quotation from the unknown writer who added the stage directions to "Midsummer Night's Dream." So there should be fairies, perhaps, both good and bad; although we may not immediately identify Aunt Caroline as the former, or the unspeakable Mr. Fitzgibbon as the latter. And there should be two heroines, shouldn't there? Well, you're quite right, and the author is obviously in love with them both. And certainly there should be, and are, some other very young mortals to share this passion, and to do some extraordinarily foolish things in the magic wood that doesn't exist. And there are clowns—or at any rate pierrots. And a scene—even though it takes place in a two-seater—by moonlight. And when you have laughed and listened for long enough—and have been just a little anxious at times—of course there is a very happy ending.

PAMELA'S SPRING SONG

By CECIL ROBERTS

Author of "David and Diana," etc.

ROMANCE and Cecil Roberts—Springtime and the Tyrol! Combine the elements and there is "Pamela's Spring Song," a joyous, sparkling story in a setting that makes a ticket to the Tyrol a necessity at least once in a lifetime. Blue skies and singing waters, or crashing thunder and raging torrents, what does it matter? Pamela saw them on the wall of the Underground and her grandmother's life-insurance money made them real. Six weeks of bliss; then, so she thought, grey skies for the rest of her life. But it was worth the risk and what befell her might befall others. Who knows? Romance, adventure, pathos and humour all are here. Once again Cecil Roberts proves himself a master of romance and a wizard in the art of description. And the spirit of Springtime is captive between the pages of this book.

QUEEN DICK: An Historical Novel

By ALFRED TRESSIDER SHEPPARD

Author of "Here Comes an Old Sailor," etc.

MR. SHEPPARD first had the idea of "Queen Dick" (one of the many names given in ridicule to Richard Cromwell, once "His Highness the Lord Protector") as the hero of a historical romance while searching, some years back, among old Stuart and Commonwealth tracts, books and diaries in Saffron Walden, once the headquarters of the Commonwealth Army. He came to the conclusion that Richard Cromwell had been much maligned, and by no means deserved the contemptuous judgment of Carlyle and others. Although imagination has to fill in gaps, "Queen Dick" keeps as closely as possible to actual history. This novel shows a pageant of English history from Richard's birth in 1626, when men were still speaking of the death of James the First, and Shakespeare had been dead only ten years, to his death in 1712, only two years before that of Queen Anne. Among the characters of whom we have glimpses, or whom we see in more detail, are several English sovereigns, notably Charles the First; Oliver Cromwell and the great figures of the Civil Wars and Commonwealth, including Essex, Fairfax and John Milton; Louis XIV and the Prince of Conti; John Bunyan, Isaac Watts, and, in the Prologue, Jonathan Swift. Richard's relationship towards Rachel Baines—afterwards Rachel Pengelly—which gave rise to scandal at the time, quite unjustly, gives a powerful love interest to the book.

BY SOOCHOW WATERS

By LOUISE JORDAN MILN

Author of "The Flutes of Shanghai," etc.

In her last novels Mrs. Miln has pictured the China of to-day. In this story she returns to the older China for which she cares so much more. In much this book is strikingly different from all of those that she has already published. It is laid in old Soochow, the city which the Chinese, who so love and understand beauty, consider the most beautiful of all China's cities. "If you have not seen Soochow," Mrs. Miln writes, "you have not seen China." Even for a Louise Jordan Miln novel, this book is packed with Chinese beauty, customs, traditions. It is outstandingly pleasant, a story of human interest, a love story from the first page to the last line. There are three English women vitally concerned in it, but the character that carries and makes it is Man Ling, a Chinese aristocrat, not unlike the man "Mr. Wu" probably would have been if there had been no tragedy in his life and no race-war or race-clash to embitter and warp him.

MEDAL WITHOUT BAR

A British War Novel by RICHARD BLAKER

Author of "Oh, the Brave Music," "Enter a Messenger," etc.

Charles Cartwright was one of the many thousands of "Uncles" in the War—junior subalterns older, very often, than their battalion commanders; more of an age with their generals than with their brother officers in dug-outs. The story is of his fading memory, to-day, now that he is fifty, of the Somme and the Hindenburg Retreat, Flanders, coast-defence in England, the hills north-east of Jerusalem, and the final advance in France—when his father is dead, his elder son in the Flying Corps, and his wife—waiting. It is this memory that sets him and his generation a little aloof from the generations that have not known it. His elder son is of the former and his younger son of the latter. To the latter generation the subject is entirely a matter of lice and mud and risk, a shocking and nauseating idiocy; to the other it is mud and lice and risk and idiocy; but it is now a haze, too, of friendships and loyalties. . . . Glimpses of fine men seen by the roadside, and lost again in its dust. It does not believe in War, this already ancient generation of "Uncle" and his surviving nephews. It has seen with its eyes and savoured with its nostrils arguments for Peace more convincing than the other generation can ever know. It does not believe in War. It only remembers. . . . It is the generation of the broken-hearted. Its tears have all been shed and it is purged of Fear.

JIM THE CONQUEROR

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Tide of Empire," etc.

When Don Jaime Miguel Higuens picked up a magazine and saw Roberta Antrim pictured in riding habit, he connected the name with that of a sheep herder who insolently trespassed on his Rancho Verde. And when Jimmy Higgens put an end to the trespasser, the elegant Don invited Roberta to be his guest while selling the sheep so suddenly inherited.

Roberta had reckoned on trouble on the Rio Grande, but not that a black-complexioned Irishman with a Spanish title might be both Jaime and Jimmy. Whereupon Peter B. Kyne steps in to rescue his several very human creations from misunderstanding and accelerating violence, which he does with the wit and ingenuity that bring recurring cheers from lovers of his adventure novels.

SPRING

By SOPHIA CLEUGH

Author of "Matilda Governess of the English," "Jeanne Margot," etc.

Spring is the story of an idyll between the lovely little Italian Contessina Giulietta Amorosa and the young Bostonian Hugo Stanning. To avoid marriage with a girl of his mother's choosing he departs to Europe. Wandering through Italy with his motor he happens on a nest of English cousins. Life is complicated for the group of people living at Santa Maria by the attempted theft of a famous picture from the chapel of the Nencini Castillo, but all ends with May sunshine and an elopement. The story is one of Mrs. Cleugh's most charming romances.

POACHER'S MOON

By ALMEY ST. JOHN ADCOCK

Author of "The Judas Tree," etc.

"She wants everything. She's greedy; greedy for life, for love. You can see it in her hands—powerful, grasping hands." This was Rowena Ivory's summing-up of Carlotta Heron, whom she had adored, and who, after their girlhood's friendship, came back into her life like a blighting wind.

Tragic, beautiful, like an exiled queen, Carlotta's demands on those who loved her were so exhausting that one by one they failed her; always she expected a little more than human nature could give. This story of Buckinghamshire, set amid the beechwoods and gorse-covered commons of the Chiltern Hills, shows how her covetousness reacted on those who cared for and those who hated her; how her hunger for her son's devotion came between him and the girl he loved and almost wrecked their lives.

DICKON

By MARJORIE BOWEN

Author of "The Golden Roofs," etc.

"*Gods meet Gods and Jostle in the Dark.*"—*Lee* and *Dryden.*

The story of the last Plantagenet King of England, slain in battle in his young manhood, 1485, more maligned and caricatured than any monarch of whom so little is known to his discredit, and so much known to his honour; Richard of Gloucester's short life was passed amid every circumstance of tumult, splendour, peril and violent action; when he was killed his fame was blotted, his deeds eclipsed, his memory slurred, and only recent research has been able to show that this was the work of deliberate malice; the *Richard III* of Shakespeare and the old histories no more existed than the ogre in legend. It is now possible to know something of the real man, whose fortunes were so tragic, and who possessed (like all his house) that "active genius" which is called "heroism."

DOWN RIVER

By SEAMARK

Author of "The Mystery Maker," "The Web of Destiny," etc.

One morning a body is brought up from the river by the police. At the same time a half-caste Chinese, whose face is contorted with fiendish hatred, is seen looking over the bridge of a near-by tramp-steamer and shaking his fist at the police sergeant, Manning. Manning recognises the Chinese as Crossman, who hates the police because they search his ship for dope very thoroughly when it comes up the river twice a year. On examining the dead body they find part of a dagger, with Chinese lettering on it, buried in the heart. Who is responsible for the murder, and what is the mystery surrounding the crime? Seamark is at his very best in this powerful story of love and adventure on the River Thames.

KITTY SEES LIFE

By MAY CHRISTIE

Author of "Eager Love," etc.

Pretty little Kitty Grayson, in love with Jimmie Barron, but uncertain of his love for her, listens to the teachings of Irma Paintor, who likes men merely for the enjoyment they can give her. Irma tells Kitty that the only way to a man's heart is to let him think that he is not the only pebble on the beach and to have a good time. But Kitty's "good times" do not meet with the approval of Jimmie Barron, and she suffers many heartbreaks before he finally declares his love for her. Miss Christie has given us a delightful story which all lovers of romance will enjoy.

FOOL ERRANT

By PATRICIA WENTWORTH

Author of "Grey Mask," "The Black Cabinet," etc.

HERE is yet another of those delightful combinations of intriguing mystery and delicate romance which we have learned to expect from the pen of Patricia Wentworth. Hugo Ross, who is out of a job, accepts a situation as secretary to Ambrose Minstrel, an eminent though erratic inventive genius. Hugo finds that he has to choose between safety for himself and the risk of being branded as a thief and a traitor to his country. As the Fool Errant, he takes the path of duty and danger in the hope of saving Minstrel's latest invention from falling into the hands of the enemies of civilisation. How Loveday Leigh came to be mixed up in the affair, and how Hugo saved her from a horrible fate, must be read in some of the most thrilling chapters that even Patricia Wentworth has ever written.

HOT WATER

By MRS. G. H. BELL (JOHN TRAVERS)

Author of "Safe Conduct," etc.

SURPRISINGLY and deliciously Mrs. Bell has adapted her marvellous knowledge of India, and the British living in India, and the British who visit India, to the requirements of a sparkling high comedy of errors. It was lovely Anne Knightley, family friend and secretary to Lord Brierley (who was forty-five, charming and ambitious), who most innocently upset the hot water, which the Indian press insisted was hot mud. Instead of her dancing attendance on the peripatetic visiting "Commission of Health, Hygiene and Welfare," it was the Commission that danced attendance on Anne—so much so that its jovial Labour member tactlessly dubbed his fellow-commissioners "Anne's Nannies."

COUSIN BERYL

By J. C. SNAITH

Author of "Surrender," etc.

HERE we have this popular author at his most versatile and vivacious. The dominant sense of humour, which characterises both the impecunious Beryl Spencer-Lancelot-Chetwynd and her wealthy adorer "Dolly" Grandison, pervades the entire story, and results in a bright light comedy, full of cheery dialogue and amusing situations. Beryl's desperate devotion to the cause of her struggling family, her plucky enterprise in tackling a London job, her notable debut as a new novelist, her constant skirmishes with the assiduous "Dolly," are equally engrossing and delightful.